

The TRIAL of ADAM LINK, ROBOT *by* Eando Binder

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AMAZING STORIES

JULY
20c

SECRET of the PYRAMID

by
ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS



**GREAT
STORIES**

by RALPH MILNE FARLEY * DON WILCOX
ED EARL REPP * EDWIN K. SLOAT

AMAZING
STORIES

VOLUME 13
NUMBER 7

JULY
1938



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The OBSERVATORY

by THE Editor

THIS month AMAZING STORIES is proud to present an unheralded treat to our readers in the form of a sequel to Eando Binder's very popular story in our January issue, "I, Robot". Robot stories in themselves are nothing new in science fiction, but how many times have we seen the robot become a Frankenstein? We've almost come to accept that precept as the natural result of the invention of an intelligent robot. Eando Binder smashed that fallacy in his first story of Adam Link, but found to his amazement that men instead, became the Frankenstein, and Adam Link, in despair, committed suicide by the simple expedient of turning off the switches that sent life coursing through his metal brain.

Now, with "The Trial of Adam Link, Robot" we bring a further adventure of a sensational new science fiction character, plotted along reasonable lines, and we think it is as true a concept of what the reality would be as is possible to imagine. We know that when you read the second adventure of Adam Link, you will find yourself drawn to him, as you never have been to the creature in whose image he is fashioned. Eando Binder has scored again, take it from us!

BUT this is only one of the fine stories in this issue. John Hale, the Laboratory Sleuth, returns to trap a killer; Ralph Milne Farley reminds us of old times when he takes us to a hidden valley in lower California; Robert Moore Williams delves into the amazing mystery of the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh; Edwin K. Sloat, another returning old-timer, gives us a fascinating time-tale; and lastly, we introduce a new author, Don Wilcox, with a scientific laboratory story with plenty of punch.

ONE of the interesting factors of recent months has been the flood of letters received from readers' ancient points raised in discussions. Whether space is hot or cold; whether a body would freeze instantly in space; the nature of mass, in relation to motion; photons; and other science arguments until your editor finds himself struggling beneath a huge mass of equations. Naturally we can't use all these letters in Discussions, but we do select one good letter on each point, and present it. This will achieve our purpose and we want to say

that letters thus presented represent all your opinions and we thank you for giving us such a flood of facts. You have helped wonderfully to aid your editor in checking science in stories.

HAVE you noticed the cartoons on the opposite page, and the one presented in our companion magazine *Fantastic Adventures'* first issue? Many readers have requested humor, but it is a very difficult job to present it in a story. Humor reacts differently with every person, and it must be super-good to get across. However, we think a laugh is good at any time, and we want your opinion on cartoons of this type, as a humor factor in *AMAZING STORIES*. We assure you, however, that when a good humor yarn does come along, which contains a story strong enough to support it, we will be glad to present it to you.

SPEAKING of *Fantastic Adventures*, our readers have welcomed a companion to *AMAZING STORIES*. The second issue, dated July, will appear on your newsstands on May 19. This issue features a novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, which is "different." You've come to expect a certain type of story from this great writer of fantasy. But here's one that is unusual. We feel we are offering you a good tip when we suggest that you read it. It is something new in Burroughs' fantasies. And just as a hint, there are also stories of other dimensions, ancient Lemuria, interplanetary space; real science fiction by authors like Thornton Ayre, Nelson S. Bond, Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr., Maurice Duclos, and others.

YOUR editors were reminded of Charles Fort and his "Lo" the other day. Seen from our twenty-second story window, in the west, was a strong light, high in the air, which remained for perhaps ten minutes, then faded. A mirage, you may say, but your editor got a great kick out of announcing the arrival of the Martians to his fellow editors on the staff of *Radio News*, *Popular Photography*, and *Popular Aviation*.

Seriously though, there are many things in legend and even in history which have no explanation, unless we use some of those contained in the pages

of AMAZING STORIES. Perhaps someday we will find definite proof of an interplanetary visitor, such as Robert Moore Williams pictures for us in his story in this issue.

WITH so many inventors, and groups of inventors today claiming their ability to construct a practical space ship, given the funds, we wonder how long it will be until some philanthropist does put up the money. A million is a lot, but what is a philanthropist if not a gambler?

THE other day, dreaming about the first flight to the moon, we found ourselves walking, in imagination, on the Lunar plains, clad in one of Paul's space suits. It really would be a thrill! But speaking of humor in science fiction, what about the space-traveler, in one of those suits, who suddenly develops an itch? How's he going to scratch it? And is that such a little thing at that? It might easily become a torment worse than Dante's Inferno, and who knows whether or not we might run into a patch of "itching powder" walking around on another world?

COSMIC rays are generally supposed by scientists to be mighty potent things. We attribute to them metabolism, ketabolism, and so on, and give them the power to penetrate many feet of lead. Only our thick blanket of atmosphere, say the scientists, saves us from annihilation, or at least some drastic change. Our authors have used this idea often in stories. But what about space travel? Isn't this a problem that will forever preclude its success, or can we assume that the scientists are assuming, and that in reality, that amazing adaptable creature, man, may adapt himself to the effects of unshielded cosmic rays just as he has to all other natural phenomena? We hope so, anyway, because it's got us worried.

THE velocity of light has been postulated as the universal constant, which may not be exceeded. Einstein, Lorenz, and Fitzgerald, and others, have made it axiomatic. And yet, the law of wave-mechanics emphatically postulates that an electron is a group of waves in a sub-ether. The equation which establishes the relationship between the

electron's speed and the waves of which it is composed is: w equals c to the second power, where w is the velocity of the waves in sub-ether, and c is the velocity of light. Therefore, when the electron is moving at a velocity less than that of light, the velocity of the waves in the sub-ether is greater than c . Who is right? Is light the fastest thing in the universe, or are sub-ether waves faster?

MANY of our readers have asked about color-photom covers. It brings up a point that might stand a little argument. We pointed to our April cover, with its painting of a robot creation on the moon's surface, as an ideal cover. We didn't point to this as an ideal work of art, as some of our readers seemed to think we had. We did point to it as an ideal science fiction cover. It certainly was science fiction, and from our standpoint, it sold magazines. It was striking, effective, and roused curiosity. It was something that couldn't be done

in a photograph, with the limitations imposed by necessity upon us.

Therefore, since we want, and need, science fiction covers, photography is a medium we must limit ourselves mostly to human figures in various scenes of action. Gadgets can, of course, be constructed, but somehow, they lack an air of reality, unless elaborately staged, such as they are in Hollywood.

However, we've received enough comment from readers to warrant asking this direct question. Would you like to see more photo covers? Let's have more than a few letters with a definite reaction.



MEN FROM MARS? HA-HA, IMPOSSIBLE!

THE Pleiades, a constellation of six stars visible to the naked eye, offers a point for interesting conjecture. Since the Greek legend of seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione (transformed into stars after their death) indicates there were seven visible stars originally, we have an actual case of a star that has disappeared. Later legend says that one of the daughters, the only one to marry a mortal, hid herself in shame. Maybe some imaginative writer can make a science fiction yarn out of this interesting old legend.

AND with that, we wind up the Observatory clock and focus the editorial telescope on the star of the coming issue. We'll be seeing you then.

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1939**

**VOLUME 13
NUMBER 7**

AMAZING STORIES

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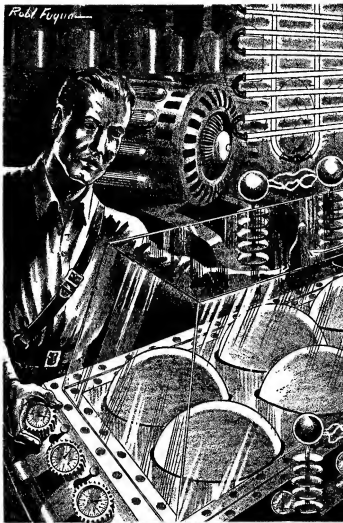
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Volume XIII
Number 7

Robt Fuyua



Zorack went from cell to cell coaxing hidden mechanisms into humming action

SECRET OF THE PYRAMID

By Robert Moore Williams

CHAPTER I

What Is Under Gizeh?

GRIMLY, Dick Wade knocked the first tent peg out of the sandy soil. He picked it up, started to toss it toward the equipment piled together preparatory to departure, but his rising temper got the best of him, and he threw the peg as far as he could send it. It struck against the base of the pyramid, came bouncing back to the sand.

Sim Beam grunted. "Don't take it so hard," he advised. "It's not our fault we've been ordered to stop just when we know we are getting results."

Wade turned to his equally youthful companion and assistant, youthful in the sense that archeologists are usually elderly men. He thrust the sun helmet back on his head and the fringe of his red hair stuck out under the brim.

"Hell, no, it's not our fault," he blazed. "But that doesn't make any difference. If the whole damned pyramid had caved in on us, we wouldn't have been stopped any more effectively. If I had my hands on those blundering fools back there in the United States—"

"For a young archeologist, you know a lot of profanity," Beam observed.

"Yes, and now is one time I'm inclined to use it." For the tenth time, he jerked a square of yellow paper out of his pocket.

"American Archeological Expedi-

Dick Wade burrowed deep beneath ancient Gizeh, but the past wasn't as dead as he thought

tion' " he read. " 'In camp, near Grand Pyramid of Gizeh, Egypt:—Regret advise appropriation cancelled. No further funds available. Collins doubts value of work. Cease excavations. Action final. Regards.' "

Viciously, he threw the paper down, stamped it into the sand, twisted his feet upon it. Silently, Beam watched. When the cahlegram littered the surrounding sand in a dozen fragments of torn, dirty yellow paper, he spoke, sympathetically.

"Do you feel better now?"

Wade looked at him, then suddenly sat down on a packing box, jerked off his helmet, fanned himself. For a moment he was shamefaced.

"Sorry I made a fool out of myself, but you know what this means to me. I sweated blood getting that appropriation in the first place. They didn't want to send me. Said I was too young. After a fight that lasted months, I got the grudging consent of the curators. Now, just when we have definitely proved that the tunnel long known to run under the pyramid didn't just end, but had been clogged with the debris collected through the ages, they call us off. Another ten yards, maybe another

foot and we may have the greatest find ever made in Egypt, a find that may make the treasures the English took out of King Tut's tomb look like junk from a ten cent store."

"I know," said Beam softly. "And I'm sorry!"

"THE damned fools!" Wade groaned.

"There *is* something under the Grand Pyramid, something that has waited there for ages. The Egyptians didn't build this pyramid. They found it here, and Cheops, in about 2100 B.C. discovered an entrance to the upper chamber, had his name daubed in red paint on the walls of the upper room.

"Hell, if he had built the pyramid, as historians assume, would he have been content with a daub of red paint as his only signature? If he had had workmen who could carve and dress granite the way the builders of this pyramid could, wouldn't he have had them carve his name, as builder, into the granite itself, as a record that would last for thousands of years? Of course he would.

"No, Cheops didn't build this pyramid. He found it here, used it as a tomb, and later kings followed his example, and tried to build pyramids. But this one—the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh—admittedly the first pyramid constructed in this area, was built by some other people—some vanished people—and for a purpose of which the science of today has no conception. Think of it—"

Wade was on his feet again, gesturing toward the massive pile of stone.

"Think of it! Some secret, vast beyond conception, for untold ages has waited here under this pyramid. Not in it, but under it. It was set here, in the land of Egypt, as a monument marking the resting place of some colossal storehouse, built here by a people

so long lost in the past that not even a legend of them has remained. Perhaps they came from Atland—Atlantis—which sank under the Atlantic. Or from Mu, from the Pacific where in the ancient past a mighty civilization perished. Only this record remains, this vast pyramid, of some lost and vanished civilization—"

There was fire in his voice. Slowly the fire died. He muttered.

"And we can't solve the mystery—because we don't have funds to pay our workers to continue."

His face worked, twisted in pain. Silently and sympathetically Beam watched his companion. A sound drew his eyes away, the throbbing hum of a laboring motor. Wade turned to look.

ACROSS the sand, where for centuries camels had trod, came—a motor car.

"More tourists," said Wade bitterly. "No, Lady," he mimicked. "There is no danger. It won't fall down. It's stood there for forty, sixty, perhaps a hundred centuries. It won't fall down this morning. You needn't be afraid, Lady. Go ahead and climb it if you wish, if you can manage it. Then you can tell the garden club back in Peoria all about your perfectly marvelous trip. You saw the pyramids, and everything."

The car came nearer, a black sedan of French make. It labored across the sands toward them.

"It's not tourists," Beam said, shading his eyes against the sun and staring. "It's Dr. Zorlock."

Wade grunted. "That huzzard again. He turned up here not ten days after we started to work, and ever since he has come around each morning for his daily inspection. I'd like to know what bee is huzzing in his bonnet."

"Just curious," Beam answered. "He

said he was a retired business man, traveling for his health. I can't blame him for being interested. This pyramid has attracted the interest of travelers for forty centuries. If he wasn't curious, it would make him a stranger specimen than he is."

"He has hung around here for two months," Wade countered. "It takes more than curiosity to explain that."

The car came up to the tent, stopped in a whirl of sand. The chauffeur sprang out, held the door open.

Slowly, ponderously Dr. Zorlock trusted one foot to the running board. Satisfied that it was solid, he eased himself to the ground, straightened up. He was about six feet tall, heavily built. Instead of the customary tropic garments, he wore a long black cape, a black felt hat, and dark goggles.

"I'd like to see him without that disguise," Wade muttered.

"Do you think those goggles, those clothes, are a disguise?" Beam asked.

"Exactly. I don't know whether you noticed it or not, but every time he came snooping around I kept my eye on him, especially when he wanted to enter the tunnel."

SLOWLY, ponderously Zorlock advanced, a dark bulk of a man against the white of the sand. There was something mechanical about him. Even his smile, when he had approached near enough for conversation, was mechanical, a stiff facial movement that broke the skin into heavy wrinkles.

"Ah, my young friends, good morning. How is the work progressing? Do you expect new discoveries today?"

The voice was a heavy drone, imperfectly modulated.

"The work," Wade answered, "is not progressing. We do not expect to make any discoveries this morning—or any other morning."

"No?" Zorlock seemed vastly surprised. "I thought you had definite information of the existence of some—fabulous hoard under the body of the pyramid?"

Swiftly, Wade explained what had happened. "Our appropriation was cut off," he finished. "We have no funds to continue excavations."

"Funds?" The word did not seem to carry a meaning to Zorlock.

"Right. You know—no money."

"Money?—Oh, yes, yes. Money. I quite understand. Momentarily, I had—ah, forgotten." He went on quickly. "You mean without money you cannot continue?"

Wade stared at him. What kind of a fool was Zorlock? He had forgotten the meaning of money. Was he so fabulously rich that money had no meaning for him?

"That's right," Beam interposed. "Without money, the natives naturally won't work. You can't blame them. If they don't get paid, they don't eat."

"But this is preposterous," Zorlock objected. "Cannot you force these natives to carry out your wishes? In my—ah—country—" His mouth clipped shut, in a grim, straight line. "The meaning I wish to convey is this: You must continue. I too, have become extremely interested in the history of Egypt. I am keenly interested in your researches. You have no doubt noticed I am a frequent visitor here. Certainly the work must not stop. It must go on. It is of tremendous importance."

"You don't have to tell us how important it is," Wade spoke. "We know there is something under this pyramid. But without funds to open up the old tunnel—" He shrugged.

Zorlock started to speak, hesitated, his eyes going from Wade to Beam, then to the huge bulk of piled granite that was the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh,

then back to Wade.

"If," he said. "If I supplied the funds, would you continue?"

FOR an instant there was silence.

Out of the clear sky, when hope was gone, a man had dropped and offered to put up the necessary hacking. It was too good to be true. It was preposterous, inconceivable, yet it had happened.

Wade's answer was a shout that came ringing back in echoes from the surface of the pyramid itself.

"Will we? Will we! Just put up the money and watch us go!"

Wade grabbed Zorlock's right hand, began pumping it up and down. 'Beam, his eyes glowing, slapped him on the back. Quickly Zorlock jerked his hand back, drew away from Beam.

"These manifestations of enthusiasm I consider childish," he said coldly. "Your task will be to direct the excavation. I will supply the—ah—funds. You will resume work immediately."

Bowing stiffly to the astonished Wade and equally astonished Beam, he turned ponderously on his heel, strode mechanically back to the waiting car. Wade ran after him.

"But Dr. Zorlock. We want to thank you."

"Thanks are not necessary. Set the natives to work at once. Do you understand, at once? I will go and secure funds, and return as soon as possible. In fact, I will join you here, at the scene of operations, so I may be present during the entire proceedings."

Slowly, he tested the running board with one foot, then swung into the car.

They watched the car drive away. "Well," said Wade. "He sure put me in my place when I tried to thank him."

Beam watched the receding car, a speculative frown on his brown face. He whistled. "There's something

mighty funny going on here, something I don't like. But I don't know what it is. There's something mechanical, inhuman, heartless, about Zorlock. The way he walks, and talks—I don't like it."

"Hell," Wade snorted. "As long as he's footing the bills, I can put up with his idiosyncrasies. He may look like a moulting huzzard to most people, but to me he's an angel in disguise. Come on, Beam, old pal; let's put these bully buckaroos back to work. The American Archeological Association can go straight to hell. We'll find whatever it is that's buried under this pyramid without their assistance."

CHAPTER II

Under the Pyramid

AGAIN the dark-skinned natives sweated in the tunnel. It was pick and shovel work, in close quarters, and necessarily slow. No machinery could be used. Even the loosened stone and hard packed sand removed from the tunnel had to be carried out in baskets. But the nature of the removed material showed unquestionably that they were following the lines of an ancient tunnel, a tube that had been stopped up for untold centuries. Both Wade and Beam were on fire with eagerness.

Zorlock was true to his word. He returned with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of funds. He offered no explanation of the source of his money, and Wade asked for none. The work was being done. That was all that mattered, to Wade.

It was all that mattered to Zorlock, too. Wade had expected the enigmatical foreigner to be a confounded nuisance. He had thought Zorlock would insist on personally directing the work. Instead, Zorlock had a tent set up for himself near the pyramid. During the

day he remained in the shelter of the tent, venturing forth only at night. Apparently he prepared his own food, for he never appeared at the commissary tent, and rudely rejected their cordial invitation to dine with them. Each evening Wade reported the progress made during the day. Zorlock, a dark shadow speaking from within the darker shadows of the tent he never left, always made the same answer.

"Continue with all possible dispatch," he spoke, in that droning, imperfectly modulated voice that was beginning to grate on Wade's ears. "But remember this: As soon as you make an important discovery, inform me at once. You understand? *At once!*"

"Certainly, Dr. Zorlock," Wade answered, withdrawing.

Beam, smoking a foul pipe with apparent enjoyment, listened to what Wade had to say. He spoke slowly, worried tones in his voice.

"I just remembered that he said he was a retired businessmen, traveling for his health. Yet he said his name was *Doctor Zorlock*. If he is a retired businessman, why does he call himself a doctor?"

"That's just one of the minor mysteries," Wade answered. "What country does he come from? He speaks English well enough, in that thick voice of his, but often he gets the accent all wrong, and often he has to stop and think for several minutes before he can remember the word he wants to use. His face, as dark as old leather, is not an English complexion. And why does he stay in that tent all day? Is he afraid to be seen in the light? How does he eat?"

Beam knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "I forgot to tell you, but last night, when I was taking a little walk, I passed near the entrance to our tunnel. And who should be coming out of

it but Dr. Zorlock?"

"What?" Wade whistled. "The devil! What was he doing?"

"He said he wished to ascertain what progress had been made. He didn't hang around and give me a chance to talk to him, but he turned back toward his own tent."

"Checking up on us, was he?" Wade grunted. "Or was he? Does he know what's under the pyramid? Is he trying to get the jump on us, thinking possibly that we were about ready to break through into the chambers that may exist? Does he slip in there every night, hoping that a few more strokes of a pick will be all that is needed to open the way to—what?"

Wade was on his feet, striding back and forth before their tent. To the east the great hulk of the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh squatted on the sands, a hulking monolith constructed by a vanished people. Overhead, in the quiet sky, the brilliant stars of Egypt twinkled. Great Sirius, and the flaming stars of Scorpio. But Wade looked at the pyramid.

"There's a bigger mystery here than you and I know about," he said. "A mystery older than history. And Zorlock, whoever he is, knows more about it than he is telling."

Beam, listening, felt his flesh start to squirm all over his body as the hulking mystery of the pyramid grew on him.

IT was at ten o'clock the next morning that the first major discovery was made. They reached the end of the obstruction in the tunnel. Wade thrust a flashlight into the hole, poked his head through.

"The tunnel opens up ahead," his voice came back to Beam muffled and indistinct. "We can wiggle through here and walk the rest of the way. Go get Zorlock. We promised to tell him as soon as we made any important dis-

covery, and this looks plenty important to me."

Beam turned, ran out of the tunnel, slogged across the sand.

"Dr. Zorlock!" he called. "We've opened the tunnel."

There was movement inside the tent, and Zorlock thrust his head out. "What is that? You have finally opened the tunnel?"

"We broke through a few minutes ago," Beam panted. "We've proved there is something under the pyramid. Do you want to be with us when we discover the secret?"

Zorlock didn't answer. He didn't seem to hear. He flung the flap of the tent aside, went running across the sands toward the dark mouth of the excavation below the base of the pyramid.

Beam followed him. Zorlock in his haste had forgotten his hat. For the first time Beam saw his skull. It was round and utterly hairless. Instead of being pinkish white, like the pate of most baldheaded men, it was the same color as Zorlock's face—a blackish-brown, the color of old leather, or old rubber.

In the tunnel Zorlock almost ran over three of the native workers. He pushed his way past them, but Beam saw they were running, and he stopped them.

"What happened?" he demanded. "Is something wrong?"

They jabbered at him, shaking their heads. Mohammed Ishla, their foreman and interpreter, was not with them. Beam realized that without the foreman he could not make them understand him, and he plunged after Zorlock, who was driving forward into the darkness without a light, and seemingly did not need one.

At the narrow opening Mohammed stood, a flaring torch in his hands. Zorlock ignored the native, and thrust his head into the opening.

"Where's Wade?" Beam demanded. "What happened? We met your men running."

"Wade in there," the foreman answered, gesturing toward the dark hole ahead. "Men no like this place. They scared, and run away."

"In there! The damned fool, why couldn't he wait?" Beam groaned.

FROM the gloom ahead came an excited voice as Wade himself answered.

"I'm all right. I wanted to see what was in this tunnel, so I wiggled through."

The beam of his flashlight was turned toward the little group. He spoke again. "Is that you, Dr. Zorlock? Slide through that hole and come on. Beam, you do the same thing. And tell Mohammed to come, too. His torch will last for hours, but this flash of mine is about finished. And hurry up. There's a door of some kind up here."

"You damned fool," Beam shouted. "Don't you realize there might be snakes in that tunnel? Or bad air. Or any of a hundred kinds of death traps. Those old Egyptians fixed these tombs so the unwanted trespasser would not be likely to get out alive."

"The air is all right," Wade answered. "There must be ventilation from up above somewhere. Some opening in the pyramid itself feeds air down here. And there aren't any snakes. No death traps either. If there had been, I sure would have sprung them. Finally the old Egyptians didn't build this tomb—if it is a tomb—and I can prove it too."

Indistinct and muffled as Wade's voice was, Beam could hear the worried triumph in it. "They didn't build it, because this door up here is metal, almost completely rust-resistant metal, a secret the Egyptians didn't have.

Which proves they didn't build the door, and probably not the pyramid."

"Metal?" Beam echoed. "Are you sure?"

"As sure as I am of anything. Come on. Shake a leg so we can find out what's on the other side of this door. This damned light of mine is going out. Dr. Zorlock, you're first."

Zorlock was already on his knees. Utterly oblivious of torn clothes, he began to push and shove himself forward. Beam, watching from behind, got the impression of tremendous strength in that tall body. Then Zorlock was past the obstruction, and Beam was following him, Mohammed coming last, and obviously not wanting to come at all.

With great difficulty, aided by Wade and Beam, Zorlock got to his feet.

"This way," said Wade, starting down the tunnel.

Quickly Zorlock shoved him to one side. Without waiting for a light he went careening ahead. From the darkness the sound of his pounding feet came back to them.

"Come on," said Wade. "That damned fool will run into that door and break his neck."

But Zorlock didn't run into the door. Somehow he saw it in time to stop. When they came up, he was leaning against it. Seemingly it opened under his weight. They saw it swing slowly and ponderously open, revealing an edge of solid metal that was at least eight inches thick.

Zorlock plunged into the darkness.

CHAPTER III

Trapped

WADE had waited years for this moment, when he would discover the secret hidden under the Grand

Pyramid of Gizeh. Old books, old manuscripts, fragile records written on crumbling papyrus, the records of archeological expeditions of the past century, the writings of the travelers who had come here from Greece thousands of years ago—Wade had studied these, seeking the clue that might unravel the mystery. From the day, when he was a youngster, that he had first seen a picture of the great pyramids, and wondered who had built them, and why. He had felt that the explanation offered by history was inadequate. All through college he had devoted more time to the study of Egyptian history than to anything else. After college, he had been a member of an archeological expedition to this country. And he had returned to America, unsatisfied, but determined to fight for money to make a real search for the secret.

Now the moment had come. Wade did not hesitate. He followed Zorlock through the door. Beam and the native foreman followed him.

The jabbing beam of the flashlight, the flaring illumination from Mohammed's smoky torch, revealed a large chamber, a room perhaps a hundred feet on each side. Overhead, arching down, were tremendous stringers, designed to provide additional support for the tremendous weight of the granite blocks of the pyramid above. Metal pillars rose up from the floor, buttressing the stringers, providing additional support.

Wade half-way expected to find mummies, or the wooden boxes that contained mummies. Perhaps the effigy of some mighty king of the lost time, glittering with jewels and gold. Ornaments, designed for the use of the king in the land beyond the grave, pottery containing food and wines to be used by his spirit in its transit to the abode of the blessed.

There was something that looked like a vast honey-comb. Cells, almost as high as the head of a man filled the room, with the exception of narrow passageways leading between them. The cells resembled heavy crystal formations. Metal cables, set on tall insulators, ran above them. From the cables two wires fed downward into each cell.

On the floor the dust was inches thick. Dust and shadows filled the room. Startled shadows that seemed to move in a weird life of their own, now that their resting place had been disturbed after the passing of the long centuries.

Wade told himself his imagination was tricking him. The flaring light from Mohammed's torch was causing the shadows. He jabbed the flashlight beam at them. They were only shadows. They fled from the light.

In one of the passageways stood a taller, darker shadow. He turned the light on it. It did not flee. It was solid, real. And it was moving, turning.

Wade grabbed at the pistol he carried in his pocket. Behind him, he heard Sim Beam gasp in fear.

In the light from the flash, the shadow turned, moved toward him.

THEN he saw what it was.

It was Zorlock. He had been standing in the passageway, not moving, and the black clothes against the black background had made him look like a shadow. Wade let the pistol slide back into his pocket.

"I will take the flashlight," Zorlock droned, advancing and holding out his hand.

Before Wade could protest, Zorlock had wrenched the light from his hand.

"Wait a minute," Wade shouted. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Do not be afraid," Zorlock called

back over his shoulder. "I will return shortly, and explain everything."

Using the light, he moved down the narrow passage, approached the opposite wall. Then he disappeared.

"What happened to him? Where did he go?" Wade spoke.

Minutes passed, and he did not return.

"We better go see what happened to him," Wade proposed. "After all, we owe him a lot."

"I would rather go in the other direction," Beam objected. "Dick, let's get out of here. I don't like this place."

"Nonsense. There's nothing here to hurt you. This place has been dead for untold centuries, and death, despite the legends to the contrary, is not dangerous."

"But look at this place. Those cells, what are they? And those cables running to them? We've stuck our necks into something about which we know nothing. Let's get out of here," Beam repeated.

Wade refused. He was trembling with excitement.

It was Mohammed who made the break. The foreman had not liked to enter this place. The superstition of his people, coming down through the centuries, whispered to him that here was danger. Silently he edged away, hoping to gain a start of a few feet before he took to his heels. He had the torch, but neither Wade nor Beam noticed what he was doing until his startled cry broke the stillness.

They whirled, Wade's hand going again to the gun.

The metal door had closed.

They were trapped under the pyramid.

DESPERATELY they tried to move the door. It would not budge. They pounded against it with their fists,

and the blows had as much effect as they would have had on battleship armor plate. There was no sign of a lock, no bar to loosen. The door fitted snugly against the jamb, with a precision that would have done credit to the craftsmanship of the master workmen of any of the vault manufacturing companies of today.

Wade dropped his hands. "It's no use," he said. "We can't move that door by pounding against it. There's a secret lock somewhere." He went along the wall, searching, but found nothing.

"The thing I can't understand," Beam whispered. "Is how it happened to close."

Wade looked at him. "I hate to say it, Sim, but I'm afraid you were right in the first place. The people who built this tomb built a death trap into it. The door can be opened from the passage, but once inside—well, probably our weight on the floor set in motion hidden counterweights, which closed the door. I'm sorry I didn't listen to you, but I was so damned anxious to see what was in here. . . ." The words ran out.

Beam tried to grin. "Forget it, Dick. It was as much my fault as it was yours. There is some way out of here, and we'll find it. Even if we don't our workers will report to the authorities that we are here, and they will send help. If I know this Egyptian government, they will take a big interest in this place, now that somebody else has done the work of finding it for them."

Wade's face lightened a little. He started to speak, but stopped, his head up.

"Listen," he whispered. "What's that?"

From somewhere in the depths of the cavern came a sound. It began as a soft clicking, in regular repetition. Smoothly and swiftly the clicking increased in intensity, built up to a sharp

whine in which the individual clicking noises were lost. Then the whine stopped, short and sharp. It was followed by a hum, powerful and vast, as of heavy machinery beginning to turn. It grew into a dull roar that penetrated to every section of the cavern.

It was the roar of vast forces building up, of tremendous energies being unleashed.

"Look!" Beam whispered. "Light. Overhead!"

Set in regular rows across the roof, dim lights began to appear. They glowed with a wavering intensity, gradually grew in strength, shedding a pale refulgence over the cavern, lighting up the long rows of cells. The vast roar grew with them, reached a peak, slipped into a smooth flow of sound. The light glowed brilliantly, steadily.

Across the cavern a figure came, moving down a narrow passage, tramping with mechanical, purposeful tread toward them.

"It's Zorlock," Wade whispered. "He's back of this, somehow."

He slipped his hand into his pocket where the gun nestled, waited for the grim figure to draw near.

CHAPTER IV

Dr. Zorlock Explains

ZORLOCK was so excited he could scarcely speak. His voice was a drone, broken into inarticulate sounds.

"At last!" he shouted, gaining control of his voice. "At last the secret of the Grand Pyramid is solved. My friends, you will profit greatly from having helped me. But there is much to be done, immediately, and you must help me. Come."

He turned, started back down the passage.

"Just a minute," Wade snapped.

"We want to know a little more about this before we go any farther."

Zorlock stopped, seemed to think for a moment, then came back.

"Of course—ah, yes, of course. You will want to know—the whole incredible truth. I am sorry I did not tell you sooner, but without seeing this cavern with your own eyes you would have doubted my word. Did you ever hear of the Trodacero Manuscript?"

"Go on," Wade answered, not committing himself. "You seem to know more about this place than you have revealed. We're listening."

Zorlock hesitated. Behind the dark goggles, which he had worn even in the tunnel, darker blobs of darkness showed.

"This manuscript was discovered in Egypt many years ago, but never deciphered," he stated, like a professor delivering a lecture. "To me—yes, to me belongs the honor of translating it. I succeeded where others failed. This incredible manuscript, written by a priest whose very name has been lost, revealed the whole stupendous secret. . . ."

He paused, seemed to be considering what he would say.

"When I succeeded in translating the manuscript, I came at once to the pyramid, to reopen the blocked tunnel. I found you had preceded me, were already at work. I resolved to wait—"

"So that's why you kept hanging around!" Wade snapped. "You were waiting for us to do the work, and when it was done, you would try to grab the credit."

"No! You misjudge me. When your funds failed, did I not supply money with which to continue?"

Wade hesitated. Zorlock had saved the expedition. He deserved credit for that. Perhaps he was what he seemed, after all.

"As you surmised," Zorlock continued. "This pyramid was not constructed by Cheops. In his time the opening to the upper chambers was found, and he ordered the pyramid used as his burial place. The pyramid was constructed 2,000 years before the reign of Cheops, more than 6,000 years ago, not by the Egyptians, not by any race of people then living on earth, but by a race of people who came in from space itself, from one of the stars of space, and landed on earth at that time!"

Zorlock paused, to let the force of his words sink in.

WADE'S senses reeled at the meaning of the words he had heard. This pyramid, this chamber where they were trapped, constructed by a race from one of the worlds of space! It was incredible, impossible!

Zorlock sensed his doubt.

"Think of the mass of those granite blocks in the pyramid overhead," Zorlock continued. "Could the Egyptians of 6,000 years ago have moved them, raised them to their resting place? Did they have the science necessary for such a tremendous feat? Look at this chamber—" He gestured with an upflung hand. "Steel beams, an eight-inch steel door closing the entrance. The Egyptians of that period were in the bronze age. They did not know how to work iron, knew less than nothing of steel. And the steel itself is nothing compared to the machinery in the adjoining chamber, machinery which I have set in motion, from directions taken from the old manuscript. Electricity." He motioned toward the lights. "An electric force that resembles nothing known on earth today. . . ."

The droning voice dropped in pitch. "With this evidence, do you still think the Egyptians constructed this pyramid

and this chamber?"

"I—I don't know what to think," Wade answered. "It's absolutely unbelievable. I never thought the Egyptians built the pyramid, but I thought the people of some older, lost civilization built it. But a race that came to earth from a planet circling some star—That means space flight. But go on," he finished grimly. "Let's hear the rest of it. What happened to this race of people who landed on earth and built this pyramid?"

Zorlock drew himself to greater height. "That is the most important part of the whole discovery. For the remnants of this people are here now, in this chamber." The arm swung in an arc. "They sleep, in these cells, in suspended animation!"

In the silence that followed Wade could hear Beam breathing heavily. Beam's face was white, his eyes glassy. He was biting at his lips. Beside Beam, Mohammed Ishla was trembling violently.

Wade's eyes raced over the chamber. He saw again the heavy steel pillars supporting the beam crossing the roof, the long rows of cells, the cables running on insulators above them, two wires feeding down to each cell, the lights glowing above. Dust on the floor, dust on the cells, dust everywhere, and he knew, beyond the shadow of doubt, that in seeking the tomb of some vanished king they had found a vastly greater secret—the place where a lost people slept in suspended animation.

"With your assistance," Zorlock spoke suddenly. "I will bring this race to life again. I know the method. That has been my purpose since I first learned of their existence. And your earth science will gain tremendously from their knowledge."

He turned, expecting Wade to follow. Instead Wade slipped the gun out of

his pocket, kept it hidden under his coat.

"Did you say 'your' earth science?"

ZORLOCK turned again. "Yes—I mean, of course, 'our' earth science."

Wade was calm. Inside he was as tense as a coiled spring.

"You've made one too many mistakes, Zorlock. First, you referred to the Trodacero Manuscript. There isn't any such manuscript. I've spent fifteen years studying the history of Egypt, and I know. The word itself is not Egyptian. That was your first mistake."

"When you saw that the door was closed behind us, you didn't get excited about it. That fact that we were locked in here with eight inches of steel between us and freedom didn't mean a thing to you. From that it was obvious that you had closed that door yourself, for some purpose of your own."

"The third mistake: You knew your way around too well. You went directly to machinery hidden in another room, started it in operation. You couldn't have learned that from any manuscript."

"The fourth mistake—You said 'your science.' That means just one thing. It means you're not a man, not human, or you would have used the word 'our.'—I don't know what you are, Zorlock, but you know too much and tell too little. And before we do any further investigating in this cavern, we're going to call in dozens of scientists, specialists, electricians, engineers, doctors, so we'll know what's in those cells before we bring it to life!"

"You fool!" Zorlock rasped. "I've told you the truth."

"You've lied ever since you turned up here!" Wade blazed. "It's time for a showdown. Open that door, and let us out of here."

He jerked the gun from under his coat, pointed it at Zorlock.

Zorlock said nothing. He turned, in a jerky mechanical movement, started toward them. He moved slowly, but with grim purpose, arms outstretched, his fingers curved like talons. Behind the goggles blobs of darkness danced.

"Stand back," Wade warned. "I'll shoot."

Zorlock kept coming.

"Shoot!" Beam shouted. "Don't let him get near us."

Wade pulled the trigger.

The thunder of the gun roared through the cavern. Over Zorlock's chest the black coat jerked as the heavy slug struck dead center.

A man would have fallen instantly.

Zorlock kept coming. The bullet didn't hurt him, didn't stop him. Instead he seemed to gain speed, to move faster.

Wade fired again, point-blank. The fire and smoke from the discharge washed over Zorlock's chest. There was not a chance that the shot had missed. It had struck him in the heart.

He didn't fall. The droning roar of his laughter shook the cavern.

Then he was on them. He smashed at Wade with a clenched fist. The gun clattered to the floor. Pain lanced through Wade's arm. Viciously Wade struck out with his left, a blow with the strength of his body behind it, and his fist landed on Zorlock's chin, and glanced off as if it had struck solid stone.

Then Zorlock's fingers closed over Wade's throat. Talons of steel gouged into his flesh. He tore at the fingers, but there was super-human strength in those sinews, and all of Wade's efforts could not dislodge them from his throat. He smashed, with failing strength, at the face, and the goggles fell away, revealing gaping holes behind them.

Zorlock wasn't human. He was some alien, incredible monster that looked like a man, a monster with terrific strength. He held Wade with one hand. The other hand, pounding like a sledgehammer, struck Beam to the floor as he attempted to come to the rescue of his companion.

Then Wade lost consciousness.

CHAPTER V

The Real Secret

WHEN he regained his senses, Wade sat up, shook himself viciously to clear his reeling head. Beside him, Beam lay on the floor, his body twisted at crazy angles. Mohammed had collapsed against the wall. Standing, his back to the cells, Wade's pistol in his hand—was Zorlock.

"You monster!" Wade grated, climbing to his feet. "You've killed them."

Ponderously Zorlock shook his head. He had not replaced the goggles and the vacant eye-sockets were hellish holes of darkness. "Beam is merely stunned. The native I did not touch. He fainted from fright."

"What—What are you?" Wade gasped. "Those bullets didn't harm you."

"Naturally not," Zorlock struck his chest, and it gave out a hollow metallic sound. "Protected by steel plates, I exist inside this cunning replica of the body of a man."

"A robot!"

"No. When I arrived on this planet I found I would need to pose as a man. Your savage warrior hordes would not let me pursue my task, if they once realized my purpose. Consequently, I designed this body to hide my real identity. To you, my real body would look like a monstrous spider, if you could see it. From inside this hollow shell, I op-

erate controls which produce a sound that may be modulated to resemble the human voice. Other controls turn tiny but very powerful motors which enable me to walk. Vision is supplied from eye slits located at the base of the neck. After I arrived on earth, I spent months learning to imitate the actions of men, learning their language—"

To Wade the recital that followed was an impossible nightmare. That heavy voice droned on, gulping at human words, telling an incredible tale, a tale that had its beginning on a planet circling Inne's Star.*

"From this planet for uncounted centuries they have been sending out expeditions to colonize the worlds of space, crossing the light years by means of the cargo with which the ships are stocked—eggs. The Zorlings are an egg laying people. The crew that takes the space ship away from the home planet lives out its normal life time, but more than one life time is needed to cross the vast void of space. Before the first crew dies they bring to maturity a part of their cargo, teach them to operate the ship, give them all the knowledge of the Zorlings. When the members of the old crew die, the youngsters continue the voyage, and before they die in their turn—presuming habitable planets have not been found—they bring to maturity other eggs, another generation to continue the flight.

Six thousand years ago a ship of the Zorlings arrived on earth, made preparations for colonization. They found, however, that their ship had been inadequately stocked. They had used all of their supply of the compound essential to bring the remainder of the eggs of their cargo to maturity. This information they transmitted back to the home planet, by sub-ether radio, and a

small ship started out with the necessary compound. Several thousand years will be needed for the trip.

The crew of the ship that landed on earth, knowing they will die long before the rescue ship reaches them, and fearing that their ship will be molested by the savages roaming over earth, decide on a drastic measure. They construct a chamber, underground, transfer the eggs to it, set up machinery necessary to keep them alive but dormant, and then, to protect the resting place of the eggs and to serve as a landmark for the ship that is coming, they build the pyramid over the chamber, the structure known to later generations of men as the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh. Then the crew departed from earth, so the savages roaming its surface would not find their space ship after they were dead.

"That," Zorlock droned, "is the real secret of the pyramid. It was constructed by my people, six thousand and more of your years ago."

LEANING against the cells, the gun steady in his hand, Zorlock laughed, a hollow, booming sound, hideous in its mockery.

"I," he went on, "am the one surviving member of the crew of the rescue ship. The others died in the long flight. I was the last egg to be brought to maturity. When I arrived on earth, I found this structure easily enough—as a landmark it is unmistakable—but when I landed I discovered that the tunnel leading to the underground chamber was blocked. Moreover, the savage peoples had made such tremendous scientific advances that I did not dare let them see me or my ship. They would have destroyed me, would have destroyed the eggs in this chamber, and the colonization of the Zorlings would have come to an end on this planet."

*A body of the twelfth magnitude, distant 9.58 light years from earth.—Ed.

Wade gulped, choked. He knew that something had to be done, and done quickly. If Zorlock brought those eggs to maturity—there were hundreds of the cells—a tremendous slashing conquest would be launched at unsuspecting earth. No telling what vast engines of destruction Zorlock would be able to loose from his hidden space ship, once he had a crew to man it. The air forces of earth, fragile planes that had seemed so splendid, would be nothing but toys compared to a ship strong enough to fly across the vast reaches of space.

Something had to be done, and done quickly.

But what? Unarmed, Zorlock had bested them. Now he had a gun. Inside that body of steel he was a match for ten men.

Plead with him? Point out to him that the scientists of earth would welcome the Zorlings, that land for colonization would be made available, that the race would be given every chance to develop itself?

Useless! The scientists of earth, after they recovered from their surprise, would gladly learn what the Zorlings knew, would gladly exchange knowledge, but the scientists were not running earth. What government, what people, after they had had a glimpse of the Zorlings, would give them a foothold on the planet? It would be like placing a deadly germ in your own body.

Zorlock had lived among men, studied their ways. He would not be likely to listen to the suggestion that men would welcome the Zorlings. He would know better.

But it was a chance. Desperately Wade tried it.

ZORLOCK laughed at him.

"I am not such a fool. We are too alien, too different. Your people

would destroy us, if they were given the chance. No. There will be war between us, between your race and mine, war in which my race will inevitably win out. We possess the superior weapons, the superior knowledge. You are an inferior people, doomed to perish. The Zorlings, in these rich lands, will multiply, spread over the planet."

He paused, and the gun came up, pointed directly at Wade.

"Enough of this. As I used you to open the blocked tunnel for me, so I had planned to use you in bringing to maturity the eggs in these cells. I see I cannot do that now. You would make every effort to destroy the embryos as they were developing."

He laughed again, a mocking sound that made Wade almost retch.

"But I have a use for you. Oh, yes, I have a use for you and your companion. For you I am reserving a great honor. I will leave it to you to imagine the nature of that honor!"

Again the mocking laugh boomed through the cavern.

"Lift your companion. Carry him down the passage as I direct."

Wade tensed himself. Should he leap, hurl himself toward the grotesque steel body, chance everything on a single throw?

The gun was pointing straight at him. Zorlock's finger was on the trigger. The bullet would smash him down before he could move.

His only chance was to wait, and watch, hoping Zorlock would give him an opening.

Sullenly, but careful not to make an overt move, he bent and lifted Beam in his arms, walked down the passage as Zorlock directed.

"Remember," came the ominous voice behind him. "I am following you closely, and I have a gun."

Wade gritted his teeth, said nothing.

Zorlock forced him toward a door in the wall, swung aside the door of iron bars that closed it. At the point of the gun Wade entered.

He saw he was in a small stone-walled room. Gently he laid his unconscious comrade on the floor, and turned quickly, in the desperate hope that he would catch Zorlock off guard.

The grating slammed in his face. A lock clicked.

Zorlock laughed. "You may wait there until the time comes for you to receive the honor I am reserving for you."

Ponderously the metal body turned away, strode purposefully across the room.

They were prisoners.

CHAPTER VI

The Zorlings

WADE'S first thought was his companion. Under his gentle rubbing, Beam regained consciousness within a few minutes.

"Where am I? What happened?" he whispered, trying to sit up.

Even in the shadows of the chamber his face was white and wan, his eyes wretched.

Quickly Wade told him all that Zorlock had revealed.

"A race of spiders?" Beam whispered.

"Something like that," Wade answered. "Probably a lot bigger than any spider we ever saw. And vastly intelligent. The fact that they can build space ships proves their intelligence."

A new hum suddenly came from the main chamber, and the spitting crash of sparks as some new machine came to life in there. Wade deliberately refused to look. He didn't want to see what Zorlock was doing.

"They plan to colonize earth," he went on. "I don't know how long it will take him to hatch those eggs, but we've got to stop him. After those Zorlings reach maturity, we won't have a chance. If they reproduce at the same rate as the spiders we know, in a few months they will be swarming by the thousands."

"Surely the natives will report what we've found here, and someone will be sent to investigate," Beam protested.

"Not a chance," Wade answered. "Oh, tomorrow or the next day somebody will be here, but I have a hunch that will be too late. After they find the cavern, there are eight inches of hard steel between them and the cells. It would take dynamite to budge that door. Or cutting torches. By the time the people outside getting around to thinking of dynamite, this brood will be swarming out of here, armed with no telling what weapons may be in storage."

He smacked his fist into an open palm.

"It's up to us, Sim, not only to save our own necks, but to save civilization from the greatest menace it has ever faced. And the only thing we've got to do it with is our bare hands. Unless," he added, "you have something in your pockets that may help us."

"In my pockets! Do you think I carry dynamite around with me?"

"Look and see," Wade insisted. "It's our only chance."

Beam emptied his pockets. "A book of matches," he said. "A pouch of tobacco, a pipe, a screwdriver, a pair of leather gloves I was using when I showed those workers of ours how to handle a shovel, and three dollars and twenty cents. That's all."

Wade groaned. "The same junk I have, except I don't have the screwdriver. Instead I have a pocket knife.

Say! Give me that screwdriver."

He grabbed the tool and turned to the grating. A glance told him how hopeless his plan was.

"The hinges are outside, the lock is out of my reach," he groaned. He looked at Beam. "Pal, I'm damned sorry I got you into this."

"Skip it. I wanted to come as badly as you did." Beam climbed to his feet, peered through the bars.

"God!" he muttered. "God . . ."

Together they watched the horrible drama being enacted before their eyes.

ZORLOCK had not discarded the imitation of a man he had built to hide his real identity. He still wore the flapping black cape. But the black knob he had designed in imitation of the head of a man was hatless, and he had not replaced the goggles. He looked like some monstrous corpse come to life, with great gaping eye holes and a horrible head that leered its defiance at all living things. He was going from cell to cell, cleaning the dust from the top, and carefully removing the heavy lids that sealed the contents from the light.

This finished, he returned to the first cell. From some receptacle hidden within his body, he took a small flask, measured out a pinch of blackish powder, dropped it into the cell. Droning and gurgling to himself, he repeated the same operation at the next cell.

He was preparing to bring the eggs to maturity, to rouse to hellish life the horde that slept there in embryo, to loose over unsuspecting earth the swarming Zorling race.

Chuckling and droning Zorlock finished his task, turned and walked out of the chamber. The humming sound coming from the next room increased in volume as a hidden generator took on additional load.

Zorlock returned to the chamber.

Glancing toward the grating he saw Wade and Beam watching him.

"Soon," his mechanical voice droned out at them. "Soon you will see the Zorlings."

Wade cursed at him. Zorlock laughed.

Prisoners, weaponless, they waited the fate he held in store for them.

Slowly, the temperature of the chamber began to increase. It rose, rose, rose, as heat from some hidden source began to surge through the room. Zorlock, busy watching the contents of the cells, apparently did not notice the rising temperature.

Beam wiped sweat from his face. "What the hell is he going to do?" he asked dully. "Burn us to death?"

"I think I've got it," Wade answered. "You notice those cables running along the tops of the cells, with two wires feeding into each receptacle. Probably heating units are built into the cells. In order to speed up the development of the eggs, additional heat is turned into the units, increasing the temperature of the cells."

"Oh, Lord!" Beam whispered. "It works something like an incubator."

Involuntarily, in spite of the heat, he shivered.

They watched. Thirty minutes passed. An hour. Still Zorlock walked up and down the passages, examined the cells. The temperature rose still higher.

Then it happened.

FROM somewhere in the chamber, above the even hum of the generator, came a weak piping sound, a whispery screeching.

Zorlock was instantly alert. He rose to his full height, swept his eyes over the room.

From somewhere inside the hulky figure, came an answering screech.

The weak piping answered it.

The first egg had reached maturity, and had developed.

Zorlock located the source of the sound, ran as fast as he could down the passage, peered into a single cell.

There was exultation in the chirping sound he uttered.

Slowly, gently, he reached down into the cell, lifted something out, moved to an open space, and set it on the floor.

Wade and Beam saw their first Zorling.

A body as big as a basketball, supported on four weak legs, four arms clasp and unclasp, covered with sparse gray hairs, weak, wet, and sticky the young Zorling huddled on the floor, an alien, incredible monster!

A head out of all proportion to its body, only half human. It turned its head up to Zorlock hovering over it, chirped in a wailing whimper.

Again Zorlock answered it.

He looked toward the grating where Wade and Beam were prisoners, shrilled again reassuringly at the whimpering monstrosity on the floor, pulled Wade's pistol out of a pocket in the cape, and started toward them.

"He's coming after us," Beam whispered.

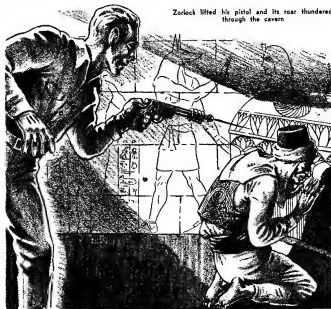
Zorlock took one step toward them.

Through the cavern a wild scream resounded.

Zorlock jerked erect, located the source of the scream.

"It's Mohammed Ishla," Wade

Zorlock lifted his pistol and its roar thundered through the cavern



shouted, pointing. "He has recovered consciousness. I had forgotten about him."

Then he was screaming at the top of his voice.

"Mohammed! Mohammed! Fight! Fight him! Destroy Zorlock. He'll kill you if you don't."

With both hands Wade shook the bars that held them prisoner, hoping against hope that Mohammed would be able to overcome the Zorling.

The foreman took one look at the figure advancing toward him, and flung himself at the steel door, battering against it with his fists, kicking at it, hammering against it. When he saw he couldn't move it, he turned, looked wildly to the right and the left, but there was no way for him to escape. He had to face Zorlock.

"Fight!" Wade screamed.

Trembling violently, the native took one step toward Zorlock. Then his courage failed him. A man he would have faced, but the gaping eye-sockets of the horror advancing toward him told him this was no man. To him, Zorlock was a god reincarnated out of the murky past of Egypt.

Slowly he sank to his knees, hands lifted in supplication, lips moving in beseeching prayer.

Zorlock lifted the pistol, and its sharp thunder roared through the cavern. A tiny hole appeared in Mohammed's forehead. He quivered, sank abruptly to the floor, face down.

Wade groaned, turned his head away.

"Oh, God!" Beam whispered. "Look!"

Down the passage Zorlock was dragging the native, pulling the dead but still trembling body by one arm.

He shoved it toward the Zorling on the floor.

Chirping gratefully, the monstrosity waddled toward the body, hopped on it,

sank its sharp teeth in the quivering flesh.

"That's what he meant to do with us," Wade gasped. "That's the honor he reserved for us. He was coming for us when Mohammed regained consciousness!"

CHAPTER VI

The Fight in the Cavern

MOMENTARILY, Zorlock hovered over the feeding horror on the floor. Its chirping whimper seemed to assure him of its gratitude. Then his attention was called away.

Somewhere in the cavern, in some hidden cell, another Zorling was chirping. He answered, went quickly to the source of the sound, lifted another sodden creature the size of a basketball from its cell, gently carried it to the body on the floor.

Two of the Zorlings were feeding now.

And another was chirping somewhere in the chamber.

"He'll be after us any minute now," Wade whispered. "We'll be serving as a meal for one of those hideous creatures."

The situation was desperate. He tried to shake the grating that closed the door. It didn't budge. Desperately, he ran his eyes over the small room where they were trapped. On the floor he saw the objects they had removed from their pockets, pipe, tobacco, a knife, a screwdriver, two pairs of gloves—Nothing that would be of help. No weapon of any kind.

"I hear another one chirping," Beam called softly, in a sick voice, from the grating.

What could they do?

"If he opens the door before he shoots us, we'll both jump him," Wade planned

quickly. "It's our only chance. We'll get back as far as we can, so he can't see us without opening the grating. It's a damned slim hope, but we'll at least have a chance to die fighting."

"I bear four or five of those things chirping," Beam answered. "And Zorlock is coming toward us!"

"Back, as far as we can get!" Wade rasped. "Crouch low."

Squatting on their heels against the back wall, they waited. They could hear the heavy tread of the mechanical body approaching down the passage that led to them.

Wade leaned forward to pick up the screwdriver. That sharp blade would gouge a dangerous wound in human flesh. Perhaps, if driven with all the strength in his burly arms, it might find a vulnerable spot in the armor protecting the Zorling.

As he leaned forward, he saw something that made him catch his breath.

The floor was paved with large stone blocks, which were not cemented down. He scraped the dust away, found the crack between the blocks.

"Help me!" he hissed at Beam.

Disregarding torn finger nails, they tugged at the block. It came up. Wade raised it in both hands, lifted it over his head, crouched back against the wall.

THE grating rattled as Zorlock worked with the catch. Then it swung aside. Zorlock, contemptuous of these human weaklings, gun in hand, stood in the opening.

"Great honor is waiting for you," he droned triumphantly. "The Zorling horde comes to life. It will be your privilege to provide them with their first me—"

In a downward slashing motion, with all his strength, Wade hurled the heavy block of rough stone. Normally, he

could not have lifted it, but the strength of desperation was in his muscles.

"Umph!" Zorlock gasped as the block struck him.

Wade hurled himself right behind it, Beam leaping beside him.

Overbalanced, the clumsy metal body crashed to the floor, the pistol bouncing from Zorlock's mechanical hand. Wade leaped across the body, grabbed the gun. As fast as he could work the action, he pulled the trigger until the hammer fell on an empty cartridge, pouring the slugs of hot lead at Zorlock.

The bullets ricocheted in screaming violence from the metal plates.

Unharmcd, Zorlock started to reach out with those steel talons that were his hands. Wade and Beam leaped away. Screeching at them, Zorlock started to get to his feet.

"Jump to the top of the cells!" Beam shouted. "He can't handle that body like we can."

He leaped, with the agility of a mountain goat, to the top of the cells, leaped across them, precariously balancing himself on the edges, fighting to keep from becoming entangled in the network of wires crossing them.

Wade followed him. Anything to get out of the reach of those terrible fingers, the battering, smashing force of those heavy fists.

Screeching, Zorlock tried to catch them. They leaped out of his way across the cells. He had to follow the passages, did not dare trust the metal body to the tops of the cells.

Momentarily, he was stalemated.

He made a rush down a passage toward Beam, who leaped quickly away. As he leaped his foot slipped. He did not fall, but he did kick loose one of the feeder wires. A shower of sparks flew out.

Zorlock howled. The broken wire kicked out sparks. Zorlock promptly

turned, padded away from Beam, started toward the adjoining room, howling in rage as he ran.

"He's leaving," Beam called.

"I'm damned if that's so," Wade answered. "He's afraid we will kick loose some more wires and destroy the contents of the cells. He's gone after a weapon of his own race, stored here for the use of the eggs when they hatch and grow to full size."

There was no question of Zorlock's purpose. He had gone after a gun of some kind, a heat ray, a disintegrator.

Their lives were numbered by minutes.

THEN Wade, looking at the broken wire, shouted once, and leaped from the cells to the passage. Like a crazy man he ran toward the room where they had been held prisoners.

In a second, he returned, carrying the gloves and the pocket knife.

He flung a pair of gloves to Beam.

"Take these. Jerk loose one of those wires—" Swiftly, he outlined his plan.

In less than a minute they had torn loose two wires, stripped the insulation from them over a ten-foot length, formed rough loops in the uninsulated sections. Leaving one end of each wire attached to the current source, holding a reserve length in one hand, the loop in the other, they climbed to the top of the cells on either side of the opening into which Zorlock had vanished.

It was a hope born of desperation. If they could destroy Zorlock—

From all over the chamber the chirping, squeaking sounds were coming now, as new eggs speedily developed to life under the artificial warmth of the heating units. On the floor, over the dead body, the three new-born Zorlings squawked and screeched and gorged themselves, utterly indifferent to everything but food.

Wade and Beam waited. Tense and drawn, their faces white, sweat dripping from their bodies, they held the loops of wire, their hands protected from the deadly current by the gloves, risking instant death if an uninsulated section touched a part of their bodies. They waited. They heard the heavy thud of the footsteps of the Zorling.

"He's coming!" Wade hissed between clenched teeth.

Zorlock came through the opening, stubby weapon held in his hands. He charged through without seeing them.

With one motion each threw his loop.

It was like snaring a fish in a tank. Zorlock did not know they were crouched on the cells beside the opening, waiting for him. He was looking down the chamber for them when Wade's noose dropped down over him, slid down across his arms, binding them as Wade jerked the noose tight. Then Beam's noose settled around his neck.

For a second, nothing happened. Zorlock stopped in his stride. There was a flash of sparks searing from the metal body, a quick burst of smoke as the current grounded out through the steel plates.

Zorlock screamed, once, a shrill crescendo of utter pain. The scream died in a gurgle. The stubby weapon clattered to the floor.

In the adjoining chamber the generator grunted under the sudden load. The wire loops glowed red. From the metal body came a burst of flame, a weak retching scream. Heavily, but with the certainty of doom, the body began to topple. It fell with a resounding crash. A wire burned in two in a flutter of white sparks.

Zorlock was dead.

But suddenly, from the gloom, a tiny monstrosity, finished with its gorging, and somehow aware of nearing tragedy, scrambled forward, grasped the fallen

weapon and hopped protectingly on the body of Zorlock.

"Look out!" screamed Beam. "That thing is intelligent already!"

Weak hands clutched the weapon in unfamiliarity, but with growing sureness as it found the firing mechanism.

Wade cast his gaze about helplessly then saw a metal bar lying against the wall. It had a peculiarly rounded end, like a medieval bludgeon, but more than likely, it was some sort of master lever which was intended to mesh with some of the giant machinery about.

Grasping it, Wade whirled it about his head and leaped forward. Desperately he swung it down and there was a sodden thump and a shrill scream that ended abruptly as the tiny Zorlock body crushed beneath the blow.

Dropping the bar, Wade snatched up the fallen weapon.

BEAM was beside him. "What—what are you going to do?"

"Don't ask any damned fool questions," Wade panted. "You know good and well what I'm going to do—when I find out how this gun works."

He pressed a knob on the under side. An intense white flame leaped from the blunt nozzle, struck against the side of a cell. Where it struck the metal glowed white hot.

Over the dead body of Mohammed Ishla two Zorlings squabbled. Wade aimed the stubby weapon. The odor was an awful thing.

Wade was grim as death. He did not hesitate. Beam was right behind him, urging him on.

He went down the passages, went from cell to cell, turned the nose of the stubby weapon into each receptacle.

When he had finished there was not a chirping noise in the whole chamber. There was a pall of oily smoke, and, except for the hum of the generator in the adjoining chamber, there was silence. Silence.

Then Wade turned the stubby weapon on the steel door.

THE crowd of excited, awed, and frightened natives gathered at the mouth of the tunnel were greatly startled at the sight of the two begrimed, sweaty, smoke-blackened figures that came stumbling out of that hole in the ground, fell down on the earth and kissed the sand, pummeled each other, and swore violent oaths of pure happiness. The light of the sun, the feel of the earth, were doubly welcome after their narrow escape from something worse than death.

Even more startled was a gentleman in New York City, the secretary of the American Archeological Association, at the wire he received from the rebellious youngster whom he thought was on his way back home.

AMERICAN ARCHEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, NEW YORK CITY: SECRET OF THE PYRAMID SOLVED. DISCOVERY OF TREMENDOUS SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE. SEND ELECTRICAL EXPERTS, ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS AT ONCE, TO ASCERTAIN FUNCTION OF VARIOUS EQUIPMENT FOUND IN CHAMBER UNDER PYRAMID. TELL COLLINS, WHO DOUBTED VALUE OF OUR WORK AND CANCELLED OUR APPROPRIATION, THAT HE CAN STILL GO TO HELL. REGARDS.

DICK WADE AND SIM BEAM.

☆☆☆☆

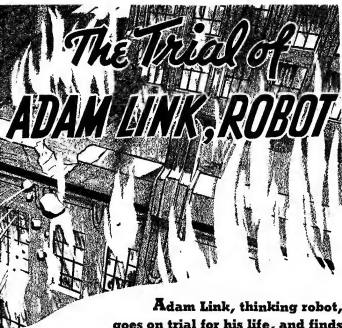
☆☆

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Robert Fuyua

I took a long run, leaped—and made it!



**Adam Link, thinking robot,
goes on trial for his life, and finds
himself facing the hate of a world.**

**By
EANDO BINDER**

CHAPTER I
Monster or Man?

I THINK I must have had the same feeling, when I "awoke", that any of you humans would have had, suddenly coming to life — when your last thought had been the certainty of "death". I felt I had been resurrected from a grave. I couldn't understand. I was "alive" again!

I looked around and saw the group of men, armed with scythes, clubs and

guns, who had hunted me down in the past three days. They had branded me as the killer of Dr. Link, my late creator. They had cornered me here, in his laboratory. Why hadn't they smashed and pounded me to broken wheels and scattered mechanical parts, as they had fully intended?

I had turned off the master-switch on my chest myself, blinking out my consciousness, lest I rise and harm them — in instinctive self-defense. I had literally committed suicide! Who had snapped the switch back on?

Then I noticed the blazing-eyed

young man facing them. The armed party were muttering and waving their weapons at me, but my unexpected champion had evidently stayed their—shall I call it mob bloodlust? He turned suddenly to me. He was young and square-jawed, and vaguely familiar in some way. He had grey, intelligent eyes. I liked him instantly. Though I am a robot, I form likes and dislikes among the humans I meet.

"Are you all right—Adam Link?" he asked. He added the name given me by Dr. Link with some hesitation, but clearly. He was addressing me as one living entity to another. To use an appropriate expression—as man to man. Only one other had ever done that, in my six months of life—Dr. Link himself.

I arose from my sitting posture, in which I had been since I had turned myself off. I nearly toppled over. One of my legs was badly twisted. I took swift appraisal and noticed the dents on my metal-wrought shoulders and chest. The top of my skull-plate, too, was dented, pressing down slightly on the electrical brain within. From that, for lack of a better term, I had a headache.

Obviously, I had been saved just in time. The enraged, vengeful posse had begun to smash me. But no vital harm had been done.

"I can be repaired," I replied. The armed men fell back uneasily at the sound of my microphonic voice. Why are humans so afraid of that which they cannot understand? Then I looked at the young man, wishing I could show gratitude.

"Thank you for what you have done," I said. "Who are you?"

"I'M Thomas Link, Dr. Link's nephew, and his closest living relative," he said. Instantly I saw the family resemblance, and knew why he

had seemed so familiar, though I had never seen him before.

He went on, speaking to the others as much as myself. "I have been practicing law, in San Francisco. I hurried here when I heard of my uncle's death. He has left everything to me. I see I have come just in time to prevent the destruction—the wanton *murder*, gentlemen!—of Adam Link, my uncle's intelligent robot."

"Huh—murder!" said the leader of the men, scoffingly. He was the county sheriff and carried a high-powered rifle under his arm. "This—this *thing* isn't a man. It's a machine. A clever, diabolical machine that killed your uncle in cold blood!"

"I don't believe it!" snapped young Tom Link quickly. "My uncle wrote me many letters about this robot. He said it was as rational as any human being. Perhaps more so than you, sheriff! And not in the least dangerous, in any remote Frankenstein way. My uncle was a clear-headed thinker and scientist. What he said, I accept. You will not destroy this robot!"

The sheriff's face reddened. Tom had been rather tactless in comparing him and myself. "We will!" he shouted. "It's a dangerous monster. As the representative of the law in this matter, it is my rightful duty to protect the community. If a tiger were loose in this county, I would destroy it." He raised his rifle and the men behind him muttered with rising feelings.

I wonder if I have an emotion akin to your human anger? He had compared me to a tiger! I know what a tiger is, from my extensive reading. My electronic brain hummed, and I started to speak, but Tom Link motioned me silent.

"Stop, sheriff!" he said warningly. "The robot—if you choose to consider it that way—was part of my uncle's

property. Now it is *my property*. I am a lawyer. I know my rights. If you touch the robot, I'll sue you in court for wilful destruction of a piece of my property!"

The law officer gasped. "Well—uh—" He began again, lamely. "But this is different! This robot is a moving, li—no, not living—but anyway—uh—it's a creature, and—" He was too muddled by the sudden change of concept to go on.

Tom Link smiled. I suddenly perceived that he was a very clever young man. He had planned this *trap*! "Right, sheriff," he said quickly. "This robot is a creature. It is not an animal, for animals don't talk. It is a manlike being. Therefore, like any other talking, thinking man, *he is entitled to a court trial!*"

The sheriff tried to remonstrate, but Tom hustled him out, and the other men with him. "If you want to continue prosecution of Adam Link, the intelligent robot," was Tom's parting shot, "come back with a warrant of arrest!"

TOM turned to me when we were alone. "Whew!" He wiped his forehead. "That was close!" Then he grinned a little, thinking perhaps of the utterly confounded look on the sheriff's face at the last. I grinned, too, within myself. It is a feature of intelligence—whether in a human body or metal—to see humor in that which is ridiculous.

I was still, however, a little puzzled. "Tell me, Tom Link," I queried, "why you have so completely taken my side? All others, except your uncle, hated and feared me from first sight."

Instead of answering, Tom rummaged in his uncle's private desk. At last he withdrew a document and let me read it. I did not quite grasp the complicated legal language, but I noticed the word "citizen" several times.

Tom explained. "My uncle, if he hadn't died so unfortunately, was fully determined to make you a *citizen*, Adam Link, as you know. He had begun to take up the matters of legal records to prove your "birth", education and rightful status. He corresponded with me on these details at some length. In another month, I was to have come here to complete the negotiations."

I remembered Dr. Link's repeated remarks that I was not just a robot, a metal man. I was *life*! I was a thinking being, as manlike as any clothed in flesh and blood. He had trained me, brought me up, with all the loving kindness, patience and true feeling of a mother with her own child.

And now, with the thought of my creator, came a sadness, an ache within me. I felt as I had that day I discovered him dead, when the sunlight had seemed suddenly faded to me. You who read may smile cynically, but my "emotions", I believe, are real and deep. Life is essentially in the mind. I have a mind.

"He was a good man," I said. "And you, Tom, you are my friend!"

He smiled in his warm way, and put his hand on my shiny, hard shoulder. "I am *your cousin!*" he responded simply. "Blood is thicker than water, you know!"

No play of words was intended, I knew that. I can only say that I have never heard a nobler expression. In five simple words, he showed me that he accepted me as a fellow man. Men like Tom are rare. They are the kind who, if given power, rule wisely and well. But invariably they are the very ones who have little authority. I have wondered at times—but I must not digress from this present account.

THE rest of that day, while Tom Link went through his uncle's ef-

fects, he talked to me at times. I told him the full story of his uncle's accidental death and the following events:

"We have a battle ahead of us," he summed it up. "The battle to save you from a charge of manslaughter. After that, we will take up the matter of your—citizenship."

He glanced at me just a little queerly. His eyes traveled from my mirrored eyes and expressionless metal face down to my stiff, alloy legs. Perhaps for the first time, it occurred to him how strange this all was. He, a young lawyer, out to defend me, a conglomerate of wires and cogs, as though I were a human being, conceived by woman. For a moment, he may even have had doubts, now that the excitement was over and he had a chance to think about me.

Might I not be a monster after all? Might Dr. Link not have been wrong in saying that I was the *opposite* of my fearsomely fabricated exterior? Who could know what weird thoughts coursed through my unhuman, unbiological brain? Might I not just be waiting for the chance to kill Tom, too, in some monstrous mood?

I could see or feel those thoughts crowding his mind. I don't think it's a telepathic phenomenon. It is just that my electron-activated brain works instantaneously. The chains of memory-association within me operate with lightning rapidity. The slightest twitch of his lip and inflection in his voice revealed to me the probable thought causing them.

I felt a little disturbed. Was my only friend to gradually turn against me? Was my cause hopeless? Was it a foregone conclusion that such an utterly alien being as myself could never be accepted in the world of man? I was like a Martian, suddenly descending upon Earth, with as little possibility of

achieving friendly intercourse. You think the comparison irrelevant? I will guarantee that the first Martians, or other worldly creatures, to land on Earth—if this event ever occurs—will be destroyed blindly. You humans do not know how strong and deep within you lies the jungle instincts of your animal past. That is, in the majority of you. And it is not necessarily those in high places who are more "civilized." But I digress again.

While Tom was busy, I repaired myself. I am a machine, and know more about my workings than any physiologist knows of his own body. I straightened the knee-joint swivel mechanism, twisted by a bullet. Two of my fingers had broken "muscle" cables which I welded together. I took off my frontal chest plate and hammered the dents out. My removable skull-piece made simple the release of the pressure on my sponge-brain. My "headache" left.

Finally I oiled myself completely, and substituted a fresh battery in my driving unit. In a few hours I had gone through what would correspond in a human to surgical patchings, operations and convalescence that would have taken weeks. It is very convenient, having a metal body.

Then I went out. I wandered in the woods and came back with little Terry's poor half-decayed body. He had been shot by the posse, accidentally, when they had hunted me. I buried him in the backyard, thinking of his joyous barks and the playful times we had had together.

"Adam! Adam Link!"

I started and turned. It was Tom, behind me, watching. His face was queerly glowing.

"Forgive me," he said softly. "I was doubting you, Adam Link, all afternoon. Doubting that you could be as nearly human as my uncle wrote you were.

But I will never fail you again!" He was looking at the fresh grave of Terry.

CHAPTER II

Fighting Fear

AS Tom had predicted, Sheriff Barclay promptly appeared the next morning, with a warrant for my arrest! He was determined to have me destroyed. Since he couldn't do so directly, without legally entangling himself in a suit, he had taken the other course.

"It will be a damned farce—holding a trial for a robot," he admitted shamefacedly. "I feel like a fool. But it must be destroyed. You're rather clever young man, but you don't think a jury of honest, level-headed men is going to exonerate your—uh—client?"

Tom said nothing, just set his jaw grimly.

Sheriff Barclay looked at me. "You're—uh—I mean *it's* under arrest. It must come with us, to jail." He was speaking to Tom, although he watched me narrowly, expecting me, I suppose, to go berserk.

"I'm going along," nodded Tom. "Come, Adam."

They had brought a truck for me—I am a 300-pound mass of metal—and drove me toward the nearby town. I had never been in one before, having lived in seclusion with Dr. Link at his country place. My first glimpse of the small city with its 50,000 inhabitants did not startle me. It is about what I had expected from my reading, and the pictures I had seen—noisy, congested, ugly, badly arranged.

I have a mechanical mind. My scientific outlook demands efficiency and order. Before we had reached the courthouse, I had picked out a hundred basic faults in this center of human ac-

tivity. And the corresponding ways to improve them. Most of all, your traffic is a slipshod maze. You must excuse my bluntness. I speak and think without circumlocution.

A curious crowd watched as I was paraded up the courthouse steps. The news had gone around. They watched silently, awestruck. And in every face, I saw lurking fear, instinctive hatred. I had the feeling then, as never before, that I was an outcast. And doomed, in one way or another.

The scene in the courtroom was, as the sheriff had predicted, a sort of solemn farce. The presiding judge coughed continuously. Only Tom Link was at his ease. He insisted on the full, legal method. There had been an inquest of course, before Dr. Link's burial, in which it was established that a heavy instrument had caused death. Nothing could gainsay that my hard metal arm might have been the "instrument of death."

I was indicted on a manslaughter charge for the death of Dr. Charles Link, and entered in the record as "Adam Link."

When that had been done, Tom heaved a sigh and winked toward me. I knew what the wink meant. Again a trap had been laid, and sprung. Once my name was down in the court record, I was accorded all the rights and privileges of the machinery of justice. As I know now, if Sheriff Barclay had gone to the governor of the state, instead, he could have obtained a state order to demolish me as *an unlawful weapon!* For I was a mechanical contrivance that (circumstantially) had taken a life!

Tom could not have squirmed out of that charge. But Sheriff Barclay had missed that loophole. With my name down, I was a defendant—and had human status!

Two newspaper reporters were pres-

ent. One of them was staring at me closely, wonderingly. He came as near as he could, unafraid. Unafraid! The only one in the room, besides Tom, who did not fear me instinctively. He, too, could be my friend.

I saw the question in his eager young face. "Yes, I am intelligent," I said, achieving a hissing whisper, so no one else would hear.

He started, then grinned pleasantly. "Okay!" he said and I know he believed. He began scribbling furiously in a notebook.

THE formal indictment over, the bailiff led me to my cell and locked me in. Tom smiled reassurance, but when he left I felt suddenly alone, hemmed in by enemies. You humans can never have quite that feeling. Unless, perhaps, you are a spy caught by an enemy nation. But even then you know you are dying for a cause, a reason. But I was being doomed—exterminated is the word—for little else than not being understood.

I was somewhat bewildered, and my thoughts were certainly of the type called brooding. Was Tom doing the right thing? Had he realized how tightly the coils of law would twine about me? As he had doubted me once, so now I doubted him, but with less reason. He was not the quite unknown quantity to me that I had been to him.

Tom appeared again an hour later, waving a paper. The court officials were with him, arguing loudly. He turned.

"*Habeas Corpus!*" he kept saying, calmly. "You've indicted Adam Link, whether he has the body of a robot or an elephant. This writ of *Habeas Corpus* frees the *person* of Adam Link, till the trial is called. I know the law. Release him!"

The bailiff argued hotly. I digested

what I had heard, slowly and carefully. That is, slowly for me. It wasn't more than a second later that I grasped the bars of my cell-door and with one concerted tug, jerked it open. There was a terrific grind of metal. The broken lock clattered to the stone floor. I strode out.

"I do not like being in a cage," I said. "Can we go, Tom?"

I am afraid my impulsive act was a mistake. I saw that by Tom's face. I had displayed my great strength, the strength of a powerful machine. It could only add fuel to their fear of me. The officials all turned pale and stumbled back, perhaps visioning how easy it would be for me to crush their skulls with single blows of my steel hands.

And that was precisely the last thing they must think of me. They must come to appreciate my mind, and my ability to serve humanity. For that purpose, Dr. Link had created me. And for that purpose I had dedicated myself, independently, months before. Once accepted as a fellow *mind*—a monster only in appearance—I could show my true worth. I, Adam Link, was the first of intelligent robots who could serve civilization in the combined capacity of mind and machine.

Yes, it was a foolish mistake. The writ of *Habeas Corpus* would have freed me anyway, if I had given Tom a little time. As I realize now, I was bewildered, and impatient. I cannot understand the strange tortuous ways you humans have of doing things. I have much to learn of civilization. Much.

Tom did not reprimand me, however, grasping my hand, he led me out of the jail. The officials stared dumfoundedly. Tom had also paid bail, and procured a paper placing me in his custody.

THEREAFTER, in the time before the trial, I went with Tom, around

the city. He made frequent visits to the bank that was settling the estate of Dr. Link. He took me to the public library when he sought reference in weighty books of his profession. Often he would just parade me down a street. We watched the reaction of the crowds narrowly. As Tom had put it—could we get public opinion to swing our way, in the coming battle for my status in human society?

Fear! It rose in overwhelming tides about me. Blind fear that sent people scurrying away without dignity. Sometimes cars, in the traffic, humped one another as their drivers caught their first glimpse of my shiny, metal form, so manlike and yet so alien. I felt depressed. Must I always inspire fear?

Children, however, proved more quickly adaptable. They had more of curiosity. In fact, a group of street gamins took to following me, tossing pebbles to hear them clink against my metal body. And a chant arose among them: "You're nothing but a tin can! You're nothing but a tin can!"

I wasn't annoyed, nor was I particularly amused. Some of the adults we passed tittered. People cannot laugh and fear at the same time. The gamins with their simple little song had proved a blessing in disguise. Even Tom—though he tried to hide it—had a lurking grin twitching at his lips. I began to have hope that the fear of me would die down, eventually.

But it was a forlorn hope. My first venture into the public library was disquieting—both to myself and others. People edged away from me hurriedly. The library officials tried to prevent my going around, but Tom calmly and stubbornly proved to them that they couldn't eject me on any count short of violation of civil liberties. The librarians gave in, but summoned police for guard. Undoubtedly everyone had

heard of me as the murderer of a man. Everyone was certain that at any moment I would wantonly kill another. I felt that, and it saddened me.

But again there was an amusing quality in it. I eased my weight into a chair in the reading room and began reading scientific books Tom had procured for me at the call-desk. I scanned a page at a time. My eyes work on the television principle, and my memory is photographic.

An elderly man opposite the reading table had not looked up. Concentrated in his reading, he had ignored the noise I could not avoid making as my metal form contacted the chair. But in the following quiet, the steady hum of my internal mechanism must have penetrated his deep study. He looked up suddenly, flashed a glance of annoyance at me, and looked down again. Fully ten seconds passed before he looked up again, realizing what he had seen. This time he was startled. He closed his eyes, snapped them open again. After another long look at me, he quietly arose, as though recalling another engagement, and left. His face was pale.

THE newspapers were particularly unkind to me. Daily editorials were written, denouncing the laxity of the law. They were allowing, it was said, a dangerous engine of destruction to walk about. I was the Frankenstein product of a mad genius, a twisted travesty of the human form. The Machine had finally arisen, as had been foretold in imaginative literature, threatening Mankind. I was the forerunner, the spy perhaps, of a secret horde of metal demons, waiting to descend crushingly upon humanity, etc.

I have since come to realize that the editorial writers were more mercenary than stupid. They were capitalizing on a sensational item. It sold papers.

That it was inflaming their readers' minds was of secondary importance. I meant nothing to them as a victim. I wasn't even a person. I was just a clever machine. They crucified me mercilessly.

One editorial writer, however, denounced the denouncers. He took my part, insisting there was not a shred of proof as yet that Dr. Link's amazing robot was a menace of any kind. I knew he must be the young reporter I had seen at the court. I had an unexpected friend, two now.

Two—out of the 50,000 in that city. Or out of the millions elsewhere who had read of me perhaps, and promptly were my enemies.

CHAPTER III

I Risk My—Life

THERE was one other thing that happened during those two weeks. The fire. Tom and I were walking down the street when we heard the shriek of sirens. Then we saw it ahead—smoke pouring from the windows of a ten-story tenement. In the excitement of that, even I became of secondary importance. People crowded at my very side, staring at the flaming building, hardly aware of me.

It was fascinating. Ladders were hastily thrown up, and firemen climbed them. There were dozens of people endangered, in the fire-gutted building. Why do you humans allow such fire-traps to exist at all; I cannot understand it. When it was thought that all had been rescued, two screaming faces appeared at the seventh story. Smoke gushed from behind them.

A hideous wall went up from the crowd. They were doomed, those two! The ladders were threatened by flame and had to be withdrawn. No fireman

dared plunge into the raging inferno of the interior. Jumping nets were in readiness, but the two screaming voices choked off and the two faces vanished from the window. Smoke had suffocated them into insensibility. In a matter of seconds, their fate would be sealed. . . .

My reactions are instantaneous, heing those of a machine. I moved away from Tom, toward the building. He was unaware, staring up with a look of hypnotic horror, as were all the crowd. They were in my way. I had to get through quickly.

I raised my voice in a hoarse bellow that was easily heard over the roaring of the flames. The crowd, suddenly turning its attention to me, and as quickly panic-stricken in the fear that I was going berserk, melted away. I dashed into the curtain of smoke that wreathed the burning building.

Hissing flames were all about me, then. I dashed through them, my metal body knowing no hurt or pain, and having no lungs to be seared. But it was a task even for my sharp, mechanical vision to see the stairs through the rolling clouds of black smoke. Fortunately, the stairs were of fireproof metal. I raced up them with all the speed and power I could command from my mechanical body. I reached the seventh floor just in time. The stairs behind me collapsed, melted through. I could never go back that way.

I FOUND the two still figures, a young man and woman, on the floor, in their smoke-filled room. Roughly, since there wasn't much time, I threw them one over each shoulder.

If there was time!

The only way led up, to the roof. Another curtain of flame had to be traversed. Summoning all my powers, I dashed through them, my metal legs

pounding. The clothing of the two limp forms I carried did not catch fire. Nor, I hoped, had their skins felt more than a momentary withering blast. Yet, for all I knew, they were already dead.

Escape from the roof resolved itself into one uncertain chance—leaping across to the next building. The distance, I automatically knew when I looked, was thirty feet. To make it worse, the next rampart was on a higher level. I would have to leap thirty feet across, five feet upward, carrying almost three hundred pounds—equal to my own weight—of inert load. If I failed—a drop of more than a hundred feet to the hard concrete of a courtyard.

Yes, I knew fear. Or at least, something within my brain that sickened at the thought of three broken bodies, two of them human pulp, lying down there.

There was no time to waste, or think. I was alone up here, and the decision was mine to make. I took a long run, leaped—and made it.

It is simple to say it, though the bare words leave much unsaid. At the moment of leaping, I flexed my metal legs with such force that the stone eave beneath them cracked. I would have been a strange sight, I suppose, had anyone seen—a metal Tarzan flying through the air, with two limp human forms slung over its shoulders. Thirty feet across and five upward! Only the tremendous powers inherent in my motorized body made it possible. And even their limit was taxed. I landed with one foot on the other rampart, and teetered for a moment, at the brink of disaster.

I had just time to shove the bodies forward, onto the roof safely, as my other foot clawed vainly for purchase. At least they had been saved. Then I slipped backward and wondered how it would "feel" to smash against the hard

concrete a hundred feet below. My clawing foot met something—the jutting edge of a window frame. It saved me. A moment later I was standing over the two bodies, looking back at the roof we had left. It was cracking and fingers of flame shot up from the bell below.

I picked up the two forms and clattered down this building's outside fire-escape, laying the two figures in the courtyard. They were breathing and moaning. They were alive. Their clothing was singed, and blackened where it had pressed against my heated metal shoulders. Some few burns and blisters were on their faces and hands. But they would survive.

I waited till my metal body had cooled completely before I left the courtyard to bring others. As soon as I stepped out into the street, people, with their nerves already tense, shrieked and ran from me. I tried to speak but no one listened.

Tom came running up. "Good God, Adam!" he panted. "Where have you been?" He grabbed my hand and pulled me toward his car, parked some blocks down. "When you bellowed and leaped away so suddenly before," he continued, "everyone thought you had gone wild. The crowd has been murmuring against you. Hurry. A mob will do anything. Hurry!"

Half the crowd had surged after us, transferring their blind, helpless rage at the fire to me. I picked up Tom in my arms and raced for our car, outstripping any pursuers. I drove the car myself, away from the threatening people and out of the city.

It was not till we had gone several miles, and no pursuit appeared, that Tom became calmer and looked at me. He looked over my body, his eyes suddenly wide and comprehending. "Adam! Those soot-streaks—you look

like you'd been in the fire!"

I told my story. Tom sat silently for a while, just staring at me. "You risked your own—life!" he murmured finally. "And no one saw you do it?"

"No one," I told him.

"The irony of it!" Tom said with a groan. "If there had been one witness, the story would have made you a hero. Now, you'd never be believed. The rescued pair will probably believe they escaped themselves, somehow. And I'm just afraid—" He went on frankly, his voice a little hollow. "I'm not as confident in winning for you, as I was at first. Public opinion—and that will mean the jury—is stupidly against you from the start. Adam, we may lose!"

THE trial was tomorrow.

That evening, I noticed the change in my young friend. Up to this time he had been eager, jubilant, accepting the unprecedented defense of a metal intelligence as a most unique chance to match his legal wits against the ponderous machinery of law. Now he was worried, depressed, as the hour drew near.

A man called later, an older lawyer acquaintance of Tom's. I was not supposed to hear, being in the next room reading, but my microphonic tympanums are extremely sensitive to sound. Behind closed doors I heard the elderly man say:

"Tom, as a friend of your dead father, and for your own sake, I must advise you to give up this preposterous case. Maybe the robot *is* intelligent, and innocent of the crime of which he is accused. But you can never prove it. You will lose, if my professional opinion means anything at all. Your own professional career will be blasted. You will be ruined, Tom! Is a robot—a mere mechanical contrivance—worth

such sacrifice?"

The last few words were tinged with scorn, but Tom's answer came swiftly, though in a low voice. "Yes! And I'm going through with it!" The other man left, realizing Tom's utter determination.

CHAPTER IV

On Trial for My Life

THE day of the trial.

I will not go into great detail. So much has been written of the event. I will give my own reactions, thoughts, observations. I was placed in custody of the court early in the morning. The first day of the trial began at noon, before a packed audience.

I, Adam Link, was the defendant. Thomas Link was my defense counselor. The prosecutor was the city's most prominent attorney, requisitioned by Sheriff Barclay in his determination to rid the county of "a dangerous menace." The jurors were twelve average citizens of the city. All of them watched me continuously with eyes that beld no sympathy or understanding—only hostile fear and unreasoning hatred.

In all that courtroom, only one man was on my side—Tom himself. No, two. There was also the reporter who had been my editorial champion. He sat in the press box, and waved a greeting to me, which I returned. There were several other reporters, from big cities, who obviously looked upon the whole thing as some comic-opera hoax, or gigantic publicity stunt.

Of all the human institutions with which I have come in contact, your courtroom proceedings are to me the most confusing. It seems an endless turmoil of questions, evasions and half-truths. It is like hacking one's way through the jungles I have read about, and going ever in circles.

The prosecution slowly proceeded to pin the murder of Dr. Link on me, by circumstantial evidence. To bolster his accusations, the prosecutor called me to the witness chair. The crowd sat up stiffly and the room became utterly silent. They were about to hear an allegedly intelligent creation of mineral matter talk. I suppose it is hard to believe.

"Adam Link, you are a machine? You are strong?" asked the attorney.

"Yes, to both questions," I answered.

"You could kill any human being with your metal hands?"

"Yes."

"You could, in fact, kill a dozen men with a dozen blows?"

"Yes."

The prosecutor had fired the questions like a machine-gun. I had answered quickly, as I always do. Tom looked at me helplessly, having had no chance to object. I knew what he wanted of me—evasion, hedging. But I am a machine. I have not learned to smother truth. Besides, I had taken the oath to speak the truth, all the truth, and nothing but the truth.

You can guess how the rest went. The prosecutor led me through my story of the death of my creator, with leading questions that constantly highlighted my brute power.

Tom was sweating when he questioned me. He, in turn, attempted to bring to the fore my humanlike intelligence and thoughts. He quoted from his uncle's letters concerning me. He had volunteer professors from the city's college ask me scientific questions. I rather think I amazed them, for I had read Dr. Link's extensive private library through from beginning to end. My photographic memory supplied the answers to questions in biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and down the line. I added, multiplied, or took cube

roots of any sets of complicated numbers instantly. Often they had to check for many minutes, with paper and pencil. Electrons move at the speed of light. Electrons motivate my brain.

Tom glowed with brief triumph. The air within the court had subtly changed. There was respect for me, if nothing else. The prosecutor then seized opportunity. He magnanimously admitted my intellect but—*where was my soul?*

THE trial rapidly resolved itself into something a little more significant than the mere death of one man. By the second day—I spent a night in the bated jail—a stark issue arose.

Could I, an intelligent but alien being, be allowed to live and move in the world of men?

Two portions of the interminable proceedings stand clearly imprinted in my mind. First, the prosecutor's most oratorical moment, when he shouted:

"Adam Link, as we have been forced to call him, is a *thing* without a soul. Without a spark of human feeling within his cold metallic body. He can know nothing of the emotions of kindness, sympathy, mercy. If once he is given a place in human society, he will slay and destroy. He has no right to live. No thing that mocks the human body and its divine intellect has any place in our civilization. You men of the jury, remember that your decision will set a precedent. This is a grave responsibility. Science, long prophesying it, has finally produced the intelligent robot. And look what it has immediately become—a *killer*! A *Frankenstein*!"

Frankenstein! Again that hideous, twisted allusion! The word alone, in the popular mind, is a misconception, for Frankenstein's monster was *driven* to his deeds.

The prosecutor pointed an accusing

finger at me. All the crowd shrank a little, seeing me in the light he had conjured up.

Tom's closing speech was eloquent, but futile.

"Adam Link is a human being in all but body. His body is a machine, and machines serve humanity. The *mind* of Adam Link thinks the way we do, perhaps even in a superior degree. Gentlemen of the jury, if you find the defendant guilty, you are sending an innocent *man* to death!"

I looked at the jury, at the audience, at the court officials. Tom was talking to a blank wall. I searched for one ray of sympathy, understanding, but found none. Yes, one—the reporter who had braved opinion before. But he was only one out of hundreds facing me. I felt at that moment, a bottomless despair. I had felt that way once before—looking down at the dead body of Dr. Link and realizing I must face the future without his friendship and guidance.

The jury filed out to decide my fate.

COURT was adjourned, and I was taken under guard to the jail, to await recall. The way led around the front of the courthouse, to the neighboring jail building. Something of a crowd, unable to get into the court, had collected outside. Tom walked beside me, haggard and hopeless.

Suddenly he was whispering in my ear. "I've failed you, Adam! We've lost, I know. Adam"—he looked around—"make a break for it! Run away, now! It's your best chance. Perhaps somewhere you can hide, find a way to live. Run, Adam!"

He pushed at me. I think he was nearly out of his mind, from the strain of the past few days. I gripped his shoulder and steadied him. "No, Tom!" I said. "There is no place for me in your world. I will accept—"

And then I suddenly *did* leap away. I am afraid I howled over two of the police escorting me. I had gone twenty yards before the gasp of the nearby crowd indicated that they had seen what I had seen.

I had seen and comprehended, seconds before anyone else, the tragedy impending, out in the street. A little boy on roller skates had lost balance. I saw the first twist of his little body, that told me he would fall. Also the car. It was coming at a fair rate of speed down the street. Its driver was carelessly viewing the crowd on the sidewalk.

All things relating to distances, measures, and numbers integrate instantaneously in my brain, itself a mathematical instrument. I can explain it no more simply. I *knew* the boy on roller skates was going to sprawl in front of that car. I *knew* the driver, with his slow human reflexes, would perceive this and jam on his brakes *seconds too late*. I even knew that the right front wheel would pass over the child's chest, and the car would roll from 3 to 5 feet further before it stopped. The boy would be dead.

A fraction of a second to note all this. Another few seconds running, at a speed that is impossible to humans. And then I was in front of the sprawling boy, between him and the careening car. There was no time to snatch him up, with my hard metal hands, without bruising him terribly. But the car could be stopped!

I braced myself at the proper angle, right shoulder forward, crouching. There was the loud impact of metal on metal. The car's radiator struck my shoulder as I had planned. For a moment it was machine fighting machine, with a life at stake. The car, with its greater weight, pushed me back five feet—six—seven—*ten!* My feet—flat

plates of tough metal,—dug into the asphalt of the paving, gouging out two deep trenches.

Then the car stopped, its engine dying with a strangled gasp. My heel plates were five inches from the fallen child's body. Close enough. I congratulated myself. I had figured it would be seven inches.

WHEN I straightened up, my right arm dangled uselessly, as I had expected. My right shoulder plate was a crumpled mass. The heavy frontal plate of my chest bore a frayed dent five inches deep. Another half-inch would have shattered an electrical distributor within, rendered me helpless prey to the rolling car, along with the child. But I had allowed for that five-inch dent also, when fixing my body in position before the impact.

A dead silence seemed to hang over the scene as I looked around. No one moved. Hundreds of pairs of eyes stared as though in a trance. The little boy on roller skates struggled up, whimpering with fright—mostly at seeing me. Then a woman rushed to him from the crowd, taking him in her arms.

At that moment, a court official hurried from the courtroom, telling the police guard to bring back the prisoner. The jury had already made up its verdict, in a short minute!

Back in the courtroom, the foreman of the jury arose. Everyone knew what the verdict would be:

"We, the jury, find the defendant *guilty* of the murder of Dr. Link, in the first degree!"

Tom looked sadly at me. A hush came over the crowd. All eyes were on me, wondering what the machine with a mind would do or say. I did and said nothing. I had told Tom I would accept my fate.

The judge pronounced sentence:

Death in the electric chair, three days later. Electricity will burn out my brain, of course, as readily as that of a human being.

I AM writing this now, in my cell. Heavy chains that even I cannot break bind me to the wall. They are not necessary. I would not try to escape. I would not want to live in a world that does not want me.

One thing has given me satisfaction, or else I would pass from the scene with deep regrets. Tom visited me an hour ago, accompanied by a grave, distinguished man. He is one of the world's greatest legal men. Seeing the brilliance of Tom, through the trial, against insuperable odds, he has offered Tom a position in his office. Thus Tom's future has not been blasted by his unselfish labors in my hopeless cause.

I must mention, too, the visit of the young reporter I have mentioned several times. I do not even know his name. But he told me he was convinced that he had seen justice go wrong, once again. At the last he made a gesture I fully realize has great significance. *He shook hands with me!* Tears are foreign to me, but something blurred my vision as he strode away.

It is amusing in a way, the last thing I have to write. I have told them how simple it is. They would just have to turn the master switch on my chest and smash my inanimate body. But they insist on the electric chair. It is the law. I will give them full satisfaction.

It is best, I think, that I pass into the non-existence from which Dr. Link summoned me seven months ago. My short sojourn in this world has been confusion for the most part. I would never understand, or be understood.

One curious thought. What will my epitaph in history be, that of—*monster* or *man*?



A molly head and neck appeared out of the water and Davis lashed at it with his fist

PE-RA, DAUGHTER OF THE SUN

BY RALPH MILNE FARLEY

CHAPTER I

The Hidden Valley

DAVID DAVIS sat slouched over his glass of pulque in a smoky corner of Mexican Pete's dingy Tia Juana cafe. A three-days' growth of blond stubble glistened on his hollow cheeks. Suddenly he drew himself erect and leaned forward in the gloom, to catch the conversation of two prosperous-looking Americans.

"I tell you, Jordan," one of them was saying, "what we need is a good aviator, and damn quick, too. Senator Ashurst is likely to put it over this time, and we want to get in on the ground floor."

Davis drained the last drops of his liquor in one fiery gulp, got up, pulled his frayed coat to a semblance of smoothness, squared his once athletic shoulders, and approached the other table. He hoped that, in the dusk, his two compatriots would not notice his whiskers and his poverty-stricken appearance.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I happened to overhear you mention the need of a flier. I am a master pilot, temporarily out of work because of the recession."

"Well, well!" boomed the man named Jordan. "Speak of the devil, and he bobs right up! Sit down, young man, and tell us about yourself. Hey, waiter—or whatever you call yourself in Spanish—some *aguardiente* for our friend!"

Seven ordeals of death faced David Davis in this strange valley of the flaming god.

"No thank you, Sir," said Davis, taking a seat. "When there's flying in prospect, I quit drinking."

"An excellent idea!" Jordan boomed. "Well, young man, I'm Erasmus Jordan, the Seattle lumber king. Ever hear tell of me?"

Davis nodded, and his blue eyes widened with respect.

"I certainly have. Where big timber is the subject, the name of Erasmus Jordan is always mentioned."

Much pleased, the millionaire continued, "This is my lawyer, Harvey Black. Harvey has just been telling me Senator Ashurst is going to revive his attempt to get the United States to buy the peninsula of Lower California off of Mexico. Great idea!"

"Yes," the Attorney cut in. "The Senator says that Lower California, while merely a useless vermiform appendix to Mexico, is the Achilles heel of the United States—our most vulnerable spot. The Japs are already colonizing it, especially at Magdalena harbor. And certainly we ought to own the mouth of our own Colorado River. Mexico has neglected the peninsula. But it is full of natural resources and, under American domination, could be colonized by the unemployed, and made

to blossom like the rose."*

Jordan supplemented, "We believe that this time Ashurst will succeed. America will have to seize lower California when we fight Japan in the next war. Might as well annex it now peaceably."

"But what has this to do with your needing a pilot?" Davis interposed, a puzzled frown on his gaunt features.

"Well," Jordan replied, "I want to get in and pick out the best sites before the U.S.A. annexes the place. So I want someone to make an aerial survey for me. Think you could do it, young feller?"

"You bet I could!"

"But, Mr. Jordan," Lawyer Black objected, "you don't know anything about this young man. Not even his name."

"My name is David Davis."

"A good American name! And I like your face. You're hired."

THE engine of Dave's amphibian coughed. It had coughed before on this long flight; but not the present sickening sound, the sound which every flier knows and dreads, and which means but one thing: "out of gas!"

"It can't possibly be so!" he ex-

claimed. For he had filled up at a coast town just an hour ago, and the gauge still showed nearly full.

Then his engine died completely. He gave her the gun, but it was no use. Feed pipe plugged, probably. If he could find a landing place, he would soon restore his gas-supply, and be up and away again.

He glanced at the desolate rocks below him, but no water did he see; not even a level space; nothing but jagged crags. A pretty ending this, for a trip which had started out so jauntily!

A week ago, in this amphibian, fully equipped and provisioned, David Davis had set off on the exploring trip for Millionaire Jordan.

He had found a number of small mountain lakes which had possibilities, and had even landed in one or two of them; yet still he had kept on, partly because he hoped to find something even better for his patron, but chiefly because it felt so good to have his hands and feet on the controls of a plane once more, after all these months of inaction. He had traveled in a leisurely fashion, zigzagging back and forth across the mountain ranges, spending several nights in various towns on each coast, and was just now on his way inland

*We reproduce here the contents of a letter from Senator Henry F. Ashurst, regarding this matter.—Ed.

Dear Sir:

I learn that you are about to publish a story by Ralph Milne Farley, dealing with a project which I have repeatedly urged on the floor of the United States Senate, namely that this country purchase Lower California from the Mexican Government. My views on this subject are still as follows:

The peninsula of Lower California is a vermiform appendix to Mexico. It is the heel—the Achilles heel—to the United States.

The Mexican Republic is both unwilling and unable to police the domain, and is unable to resist aggressions from or settlements on the peninsula by oriental powers, hence a base of supplies or of military and naval operations could be established there with comparative ease and secrecy.

Our duty is plain. In these troublous times we

in charge of the Nation's destiny, holding the most sacred deposit ever confided to human hands, should not shrink or shrink. If we perform these duties, glory will be our portion; if we fail, it will be to our shame. There is no remorse so deep, so poignant, so inveterate, as that which comes from the consciousness that we have failed at a supreme crisis to avail ourselves of an opportunity to perform a real and needful public service to our country, and there is no happiness more sustaining, more enduring, or more unselfish than the consciousness that we have met in a worthy manner the responsibilities upon us.

Fortune, success, and opportunity soar aloft on high and rapid wing. They must be seized as they pass by. It is a difficult task to overtake them once they have left us behind, or found us asleep or afraid.

Sincerely yours,

Henry F. Ashurst.

from such a stop, when his motor had gone dead.

No level land nor water was in sight, but to the left of him the mountains seemed a bit less high than elsewhere. So he put his machine into as flat a glide as possible, and turned her nose in that direction. Perhaps he would be able to skim the successive ridges, and finally reach the Gulf of California in safety.

He barely cleared the first ridge; then, to his despair, he saw that he was in the center of a circular range of serrated peaks, which at no other place was as low as where he had just crossed. This circle was twenty miles or so in diameter, and nowhere within it could he see any spot which appeared to be level enough for landing.

Lower and lower the plane sank in its onward rush. Close ahead rose a small hill, the flattest he had yet seen, but as he approached it, he suddenly saw that this apparent flat plateau was but the narrow rim of a crater-like hollow.

Too late to turn back now, he barely skimmed this rim, and found himself within the crater, which was about three miles across.

On all sides towered precipitous cliffs. But in the exact center of the depression there lay a small lake, large enough for landing. With a sigh of relief, Davis nosed down, and soon was floating placidly on the glassy surface of the water.

AS soon as the amphibian was beached, he set about investigating his gas supply. He found the tank bone dry, and the gauge cleverly wedged with a sliver of wood. Undoubtedly the scoundrelly coast Mexican, who was supposed to have refueled the ship, had thought more of a few filthy pesos than he had of the American's life.

In despair, Davis looked around him.

His plane was now useless, the crags on every side seemed absolutely unscalable, and even if he succeeded in surmounting them, how could he ever live to cross the many miles of bad-lands which lay beyond!

Yet where he was now marooned was not at all terrifying. The little lake was an azure gem. Its several islands were each large enough to hold a house and quite sizable grounds. The shores sloped up gradually to the foot of the surrounding cliffs. There were beaches of white sand, marshes of sedge, rolling meadows, and thick groves of hardwood. Plovers teetered along the beaches; a flock of ducks swam around the end of one of the islands; a fish jumped; a rabbit hopped out of one of the groves and started nibbling on some succulent herb; a quail piped in the distance; and somewhere a loon screamed. This was indeed a bit of paradise. No one would ever suspect its existence, in the midst of these desert mountains! For a moment Davis forgot his predicament, in his ecstasy at having discovered just the type of site which old Jordan had deputed him to find.

His reverie was interrupted by seeing a dozen nearly naked warriors, armed with spears, emerging from a nearby grove. Leading them was a young man wearing a cape of iridescent feathers, and a grotesque lacquered headdress with long plumes. Instinctively Davis reached for his automatic, but the approaching natives dropped their spears to the ground, and knelt on the white sand, their foreheads on their knees, their arms extended toward him.

"Cusahl quottle! Cusahl quottle!" they were clicking in awed tones; or so the words sounded to the amazed American.

And then in a flash it came over him that these sounds were probably the proper pronunciation of "Quetzalcoatl,"

the name of the ancient golden-haired deity of the Mayans of Central America: Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent.

These ignorant natives thought that he was their god. Small wonder! For his hair was yellow, and his eyes blue, like those of the god, and he too had flown down to them on a winged dragon out of the sky. He had read novels based on exactly that plot.

"What next?" he wondered, racking his brains for a memory of the next conventional step taken by the pseudo-gods of such novels.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sight of a tall white-bearded white-robed figure, emerging from the same grove from which the twelve savages and their leader had appeared. This newcomer majestically approached the scene without the least hint of servility or superstitious awe in his bearing.

FOR a moment he surveyed the cringing group on the sand; then spoke imperious words in a strange clicking guttural tongue. The man with the feathered cape and lacquered headdress arose with evident embarrassment, and muttered something about "Quetzalcoatl."

Again the bearded newcomer spoke, and his voice was full of anger. The natives meekly rose to their feet, and picked up their spears. The aviator nervously fingered his automatic. He seemed to be in for some sort of trouble. Gone were all his dreams of becoming a god to these primitive people.

"My son," said the majestic old man in halting Spanish, a language with which Davis was fortunately acquainted, "you have committed a great sacrilege by permitting my ignorant followers to worship you as Quetzalcoatl, messenger of Ra, the flaming god."

"But I am lost. My plane is out of gas," stammered the aviator.

"You shall be our guest—for the present," announced the old man ominously. "Meanwhile be so good as to let me take care of your 'gun' for you."

"And if I refuse?" asked Davis, backing away a bit.

A few sharp clicking words from the old man, and the twelve spearmen raised their spears. Their plumed leader, however, slunk away with a very black look at Davis.

"You will *not* refuse," said the old man calmly.

Davis ran his eyes over the resolute savages in front of him. He had only seven shots in the chamber of his automatic. Seven shots. Seven dead enemies—possibly. What would the other six do, while he was reloading? If he shot their venerable leader first, they might run. Or, fanatically, they might stand their ground.

"You win!" said he, in English, handing over the gun.

"And now please to accompany me," said the old man. "Your 'plane' will be safe for the present."

With one last lingering look at his amphibian, Davis fell into step beside his host, and together they set off toward the nearby grove of trees, followed by the squad of twelve spearmen.

Through the wood they passed, upon a well defined path, emerging at the other side upon a rolling meadow which lay along the foot of the cliffs.

And such cliffs! The entire lower portion of their face, which heretofore had been masked from Davis's gaze by the grove of trees, was covered with grotesque Mayan carvings, and dotted with the entrances to many caves. A road ran along the foot of the cliff, and down this road to the right they passed, while scores of men in loin-cloths, blanketed women, and naked children turned out to stare at them as they went by. Occasionally there would be heard

some muttered comment, which invariably included the word "Quetzalcoatl"; but each such comment would be instantly silenced by a peremptory expletive and angry glance from the white-bearded old man.

The road was of sand, until they came to a stretch of fine jet-black volcanic cinders. Davis was just noticing this when the road came to an abrupt stop at the edge of a patch of neatly trimmed grass, which his captors carefully avoided.

"Summer greens still too wet to play," Davis laughed to himself. "Wish I'd brought my golf-clubs."

Beyond the "putting green," the road was of red clay for a short distance, and then became the conventional white sand again.

If it hadn't been for the peculiar mental associations called to mind by the "putting-green," Dave probably would not have really noticed this peculiar road at all.

Finally the road passed some neatly tilled fields; and at last the party halted in front of a very ornately carved portion of cliff, and the old man dismissed his spearmen, and approached a large cave-mouth.

Now that the guards were gone, why not suddenly grapple with the old man, wrench the automatic from his grasp, shoot him down, and then by signs indicate to the native population that he, Quetzalcoatl, had called down the lightnings of Heaven to slay this defamer of the messenger of the true god? For, regardless of the bits of modern knowledge which the old man inexplicably possessed, Davis was convinced that the bulk of the native population had never before seen either firearms or an airplane, and that they all instinctively took his seemingly miraculous arrival and his yellow hair as an indication that he had indeed come from the sun.

And then, framed in the cave-mouth, Davis saw a girl!

A SLEEVELESS doeskin tunic, gathered in at her slim waist, hung down to just above her neatly rounded knees. The soft folds of this garment accentuated every curve of her radiant girlish body. Her face was as exquisitely chiseled as a cameo. Her skin had the healthy tan of a Caucasian, rather than the copper color of an Indian, or the adobe brown of a Mexican. Her blue-black hair, neatly parted in the middle, and surmounted by a single vermilion flamingo-feather, hung in two long thick braids in front of her shoulders. Her arms, legs, and feet were bare and without ornaments.

She paid no attention to David Davis. Calling out "Vatel" in a glad little silver voice, she ran nimbly from the cave and nestled in the arms of the white-robed old man.

The old man replied in a few crooning words, quite a contrast to the imperious tones which he had used to Davis and to the naked savages. Then his tone changed from endearment to ordinary conversational, at which the girl turned to face their guest with a few strange syllables, evidently of greeting.

"This is my grand-daughter, named Pe-Ra, 'Child of the Sun'," explained the old man. "She say, 'Welcome to our home.' She says it in Mayan, for she cannot speak the Spanish."

"Ah, but I can speak it a little, Vatel," interjected Pe-Ra, dimpling.

"Muy poquito, querida," replied her grandfather. Then to Davis, "Enter our home, and may the flaming god shine upon our guest."

Somehow this struck an ominous note. "I hope, sir," Davis inquired, "that I am not to be offered as a sacrifice to your flaming god."

"Heaven forbid!" replied his host.

"For we practice the ancient rite of Mu, the motherland, unsullied by any modern barbarisms."

Not quite convinced, Davis entered the cave. It was high and vaulted, hewed out of solid rock. It was decorated in barbaric splendor, with mural carvings and paintings, skins of animals, and woven blankets and tapestries of gaudy colors; and was lit by many open-wick pottery lamps, which strangely smelt of kerosene.

Seating Davis on a low divan, with Pe-Ra beside him, the venerable host withdrew. They sat, for a few moments, in embarrassed silence. Then Davis put some simple question in Spanish; the girl answered, and soon they were carrying on a conversation quite voluble considering that Spanish was a language that was native to neither of them.

From Pe-Ra, Davis learned that this people had lived here for thousands of years, ever since coming from some mythical country known as "the motherland." Pe-Ra knew that there was a world outside this valley, but none of her people had ever been to this outer world, as the cliffs which surround the valley were unscalable. Their community was made up of the priests and their families, the spearmen who kept order and slew whatever wild beasts emerged from the jungles across the lake, the workers who tilled the fields and wove and mined, and the slaves who attended the priests. Altogether there were about a thousand people in the community. They worshiped Ra, the flaming god, and Quetzalcoatl, his human incarnation and messenger. Vatel, the girl's grandfather, was High Priest of Ra, and hence was both spiritual and temporal head of the community.

Then Davis told Pe-Ra about America.

THE old priest was gone for nearly an hour. By the time he returned, the American man and the Mayan girl had become well acquainted.

Vatel announced his presence by abruptly remarking, "Young man, if your stay with us was to be merely temporary, you could be our guest. But, as the misfortune to your plane dooms you to remain in this valley forever—"

"Forever?" Davis exclaimed, horrified.

"Yes, forever," replied his host, with sickening finality, "for there is no way out of this valley, and—"

"You have oil here," Davis interrupted. "Perhaps I can make gasoline from it, and—"

"As I was saying," the old man suavely cut in, "even if there were a way out, it is inadvisable that the outer world should ever know of this valley. Your fellow countrymen might teach my peaceful people about guns and war. It would be better that you stay with us. And so you must take your proper place in our community. As you are not of our race, that proper place is that of slave."

"Vatel!" remonstrated the girl.

Her grandfather made some remark in Mayan, to which she replied in the same language.

Then, in Spanish, she spoke to Davis, "Vatel says that I may have you for my personal slave, which will be fun, if you will tell me more stories of your strange country."

Davis grinned. "I'm willing to give it a try," said he.

"You will continue as our guest for this one meal," Vatel announced. Dinner was then brought by a dark-skinned youth, who was addressed as Miguel.

The viands were modern and well cooked: soup, fowl, stewed greens, a root vegetable, papayas, and wine. They were served in plates of carved

gold, and cups and bowls of brilliantly decorated pottery.

As he ate, Davie Davis turned over a number of thoughts in his mind. If this valley were truly inescapable, how was it that the old Mayan priest could speak Spanish so fluently, and knew all about firearms and airplanes, and owned a slave named Miguel, evidently a Mexican. Surely there was something phony here somehow! Well, it would pay to appear to fall in with their plans, and meanwhile keep his eyes open.

After the meal, Davis was turned over to Miguel, who was instructed to quarter and equip him as befitted a slave of the High Priest. The equipment consisted of a sleeveless shirt, bound in at the waist by a short skirt wound round and round like a Scotch kilt. Miguel wore the same. The quarters, to Davis's relief, consisted of an ample cave room to himself, with one window, just over the main door to Vatel's cave.

After arranging the gaudy sleeping rugs, and changing his clothes, and hanging his discarded American garments on pegs, Davis walked downstairs and out the main mouth of the cave. There beside the opening stood Pe-Ra talking with the same ornately garbed young man who had led the spearmen on the American's first arrival. He was still wearing his iridescent feathered cape, but was holding his lacquered headdress on one arm. His face was handsome, sneering, and cruel.

Something about this man's bearing toward the girl—a proprietary attitude—irritated Davis immensely.

The warrior scowled at Davis, and then put some question to the girl in the native tongue, to which she replied, with a little toss of her head.

Then turning to Davis, she said impudently in Spanish, "This is my es-

pecial friend, named Cumcuz. Serve him as you would serve me. Now go!"

HUMBLY Davis withdrew. Having nothing particular to do, he sought out Miguel. The young Mexican proved to be quite willing to talk. Cumcuz, he said, was a minor priest. All of the priesthood except old Vatel, and even Vatel on occasion, wore the gaudy headdress and feathered cape. Miguel himself had been born in one of the coast towns of Lower California; but ten years ago at the age of eight he had been kidnapped by a slaving raid led by Vatel. Practically all the slaves of this community were Mexicans, or of Mexican descent, and had been recruited in this manner.

"Then there is a way out of this valley!" exclaimed Davis, eagerly.

"Certainly," replied Miguel, but without enthusiasm. "Everyone knows *that*. But no one, except old Vatel and the other chief priests, knows the exact location of the secret passage which leads to the outer world. They always blindfold the warriors whom they take with them, and the slaves whom they bring back."

"Miguel," exclaimed the American, clapping his fellow slave on the shoulder, "you and I are going to find that passage, and get out of here!"

"Do you really think so?" asked the Mexican eagerly.

"Surest thing you know!" Davis confidently replied, although in his heart he didn't feel so confident.

The Mexican looked at him with dog-like devotion. "If we only could!"

CHAPTER II

Trouble in the Valley

THAT night, after pondering for a while, Davis slept dreamlessly on

his pile of blankets, for he had had a full and tiring day. He awoke in the gray light of early dawn, to the clangor of a metallic gong which blared through-out the valley. Crawling sleepily to his window, he beheld all the populace swarming out of their caves and lining up at the foot of the cliffs; so, full of curiosity, he slipped on his sleeveless shirt, wound his short skirt about his waist, and joined the throng.

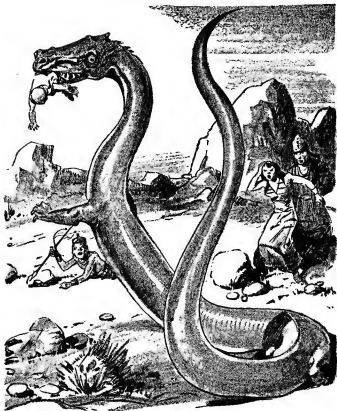
Whatever was the matter, it certainly was not a fire, nor an attack, nor anything of that sort, for no one seemed in the least excited. And yet all of them were staring fixedly across the lake.

The sky at the opposite rim of the encircling cliffs gradually pinkened, until finally the edge of the sun's disk appeared. At this sight, everyone prostrated himself on his face, with his arms stretched in adoration toward the flaming god, while Vatel intoned a chant in the Mayan tongue, until the entire disk of the sun was visible. Then all the people arose and went to their caves. A simple, but impressive, ceremony.

Davis was helping Miguel serve breakfast, when cries and shouts of excitement were heard outside. Leaping up from his seat, old Vatel rushed to



Davis took careful aim at the spot where he judged the teaspoonful of brains to be, and fired



the cave-mouth, followed by his establishment.

Outside, women were wailing. Several spearmen, directed by men in lacquered headdresses and feathered capes, were holding in their grasp another spearman, who was trying to escape them.

At a few snapped words of inquiry from Vatel, a chorus of explanations

was babbled in Mayan.

Forgetting his servile position, Davis asked, "What is it, Sir?"

Vatel turned toward him with a shrug of resignation. "A serpent from the jungles across the lake has stolen a child. It would be suicide to follow. See, they are restraining the child's father."

"Give me my gun," begged Davis.

"It's a forty-five, and would stop anything that lives."

"No! No!" interposed Pe-Ra, anxiously.

"Would it matter what becomes of me?" Davis asked her.

"Certainly," she replied, tossing her head, "for no one cares to lose a good slave."

Vatel looked searchingly at the two of them. "Here is the gun," he said, producing it unexpectedly from the folds of his toga. "Release the spearman! Go, you two, and may the blessings of Ra go with you."

The struggling spearman was released. Snatching up his spear, he raced off to the left around the margin of the lake, and the American followed him, brandishing the automatic.

They had not gone far when they overtook a huge snake-like quadruped waddling ponderously away from them, with a squalling child held tightly in its repulsive ophidian jaws.

Rushing fearlessly up to the reptile, the frantic father thrust his spear into its side, whereupon it dropped the child, wheeled with unexpected speed, felled the native with a side swipe of its head, and then planted one forepaw firmly upon his body.

With a guttural hiss, it then extended its neck tentatively toward Davis. Stepping back a pace, the young man took careful aim with his automatic toward the spot where he judged the teaspoonful of brains to be, and fired. The leaden slug crushed the skull for a space as big as a human fist, whereupon the beast began to thrash around like a scotched snake. Braving these death throes, Davis leaped in and seized the unconscious form of his ally.

But a stroke of the huge tail knocked them both flat upon the ground. However, the reptile's efforts seemed evidently directed by no conscious pur-

pose; and so Davis, although badly bruised and nearly winded, was able laboriously to drag the warrior's body to safety. Then drawing the warrior's copper sword from its sheath, Davis crawled back again to the thrashing serpent, and started hacking at its neck just behind its crushed skull, for he was determined to take no chance of its reviving.

As the keen copper blade penetrated the nape of the reptile's neck, it suddenly galvanized into action again. Taken completely by surprise, Davis went down beneath its onslaught.

THE next thing that he knew was a confused babble of voices all about him. He was lying where he had fallen, but his head rested on the lap of Miguel, his fellow-slave, who was bathing his face with water. Nearby stood Pe-Ra and her grandfather, looking down at him with expressions of keen admiration. A native woman was hugging a little child passionately in her arms, while beside her stood a grinning spearman, feeling of his bruises. The decapitated body of the huge saurian lay nearby, still twitching slightly.

Around this group stood a crowd of priests and natives and slaves, and among them Davis caught sight of the scowling face of Cumcuz.

Vatel directed the spearmen to construct a litter of spears, and the hero was borne back in triumph to the caves.

His wounds proved not to be serious. The next day he was on his feet again, although limping somewhat. The father of the rescued child called upon him; and, through the medium of Miguel as interpreter, expressed his undying gratitude, which—so Miguel explained—caused the spearman considerable embarrassment, due to the fact that Davis was, after all, only a slave.

During the succeeding days, Davis

was much in the company of the beautiful Pe-Ra, who was most solicitous of his wounds. He told her a great deal about the outer world, and she thrilled at these tales, and longed to see the America which he described.

"I'll take you there some day," he asserted, with a show of confidence which he did not feel.

She smiled eagerly; then sobered and said, "But how? For no one can ever leave this valley."

Davis did not press the point, for fear that she might tell her grandfather. Instead he turned the subject to the monster which he had subdued. Pe-Ra explained that the jungles and marshes over across the lake were filled with these beasts and with others even more terrible.

"Why not smoke them out, drive them into a corral, and slaughter them?" he proposed. "It would be quite easy."

The girl agreed with him. But when they broached the matter to old Vatel, he enigmatically replied, "They have their uses, and must not be disturbed."

Under the able tuition of the girl, Davis began the study of Mayan, which he found to be an extremely simple language. But Cumcuz claimed as much as possible of Pe-Ra's time, and subjected his American rival to many minor indignities and insults, in an evident attempt to incite the slave to some act of violence; but Davis, seeing the point, bore all these indignities and insults with a maddening imperturbable grin. And whenever Cumcuz was busy with his military or priestly duties, Davis spent this time with Pe-Ra.

THE girl was surprisingly modern in her outlook. Her sense of humor was inexhaustible and rather impish; and, finding in Dave a ready listener and a kindred spirit, she poked fun at

everything and everybody about her.

Especially was she fed-up with the pomposity of the priesthood, excepting of course her grandfather. She confided to Davis a rihald poem, which she had composed about the twelve leaders of the hierarchy:

*"First Vatel, white-bearded, whom I
adore;
Then sour old Coh, who's a bully and
bore;
Then Pell, who has that big wart on
his nose;
Then Poco, who waddles, with broad
duck-like toes;
And Ixl, whose beard is as black as a
crow; . . ."*

And so on. Davis learned it from her, and would chuckle heartily to himself at the aptness of the lines, whenever he saw one of the twelve chief priests.

He had been in the valley of the ancient sun-worshippers about a month, when there recurred to him a question, of which he had not thought since his first conversation with old Vatel. What was the oil which these Mayans burned in their pottery lamps? Undoubtedly some sort of high-grade crude petroleum. If so, couldn't he refine it, until it became gasoline? Gasoline which he could use in his still intact airplane, to escape from this prison!

True, it was a beautiful valley. True, it held the prettiest and most attractive girl whom he had ever known. But it was a prison nevertheless, and so he was determined to escape from it. Furthermore he certainly owed a duty to millionaire Jordan, his patron, who must by now be wondering and worrying what had become of him.

With this in view, but concealing his purpose, he approached Vatel, and inquired about this oil. The old priest, with perfect frankness, told him that it

came from a sacred well in one of the caves. Certain minor priests had the duty of purifying the oil, by straining it through filters which contained successive layers of charcoal and wood-ash. On Davis's expressing a willingness to work part-time in the laboratory of these priests, he was permitted to do so.

Now to manufacture gasoline! But first to frame-up some kind of an excuse for doing so. So he informed Vatel that he planned to arrange a new and better variety of lamp, for which it would be necessary to transform the fluid.

Fortunately he found that not only did the Mayans know the lost art of tempering copper, but also that they could render copper extremely malleable when desired. In fact, the manufacture of copper-piping was already one of their accomplishments.

So he made a gasoline lantern after the general nature of the flares used in circuses; and also built a still, from which he was able to produce—in a rather hit or miss manner—distillates of various and varying gravities, running all the way from kerosene to naphtha. Finally, with much practice and infinite patience, assisted by the hydrometer from the battery-tester of his plane, he learned how to regulate the temperature of distillation to a sufficient degree so as to produce a fluid roughly resembling that which he desired. This he stored in quantities in earthenware jugs in his own quarters.

And all the time he vaguely wondered why keen old Vatel so calmly permitted him to manufacture and store up this means of escape. Did not Vatel know that this was fuel for the plane? Did not Vatel remember the suggestion which Davis had let drop on the first day of his imprisonment?

But did Davis really want to get

away from Pe-Ra after all? Why not take her with him? She had always displayed an interest in the airplane; the prospects of a trip in it would certainly delight her.

IT was Miguel, his fellow slave, who first set his mind working along practical lines. "My friend," the Mexican suddenly said one day when they happened to be alone together in the servants' quarters of Vatel's household, "you love the lady Pe-Ra, do you not?"

"Why—why—certainly not!" Davis stammered.

"Ah, my friend," Miguel said, grinning, "you reveal yourself. And why not! She is a lady here, and you are a gentleman on the outside. When we leave this accursed valley together, you and I, let us take her with us."

But Davis shook his head sadly. "In the outside world I am 'caballero,' yes," he replied, "but here in this valley I am merely a slave. And it is *here* that I must win Pe-Ra."

"Then why not join the priesthood?" suggested Miguel. "Even the lowest priest would be eligible to the hand of Pe-Ra."

"But surely a slave cannot become a priest!"

"*Anyone* can become a priest," the Mexican asserted, "if he can survive the seven mysteries."

But when Davis approached Vatel on the matter, the old man explained that "the seven mysteries" were more than a mere formal initiation or test of fitness. Rather they were a series of ordeals, in each of which a gruesome death would ensue unless the candidate were duly informed in advance just what to do at every turn. Accordingly a friend was always detailed as "conductor" for each favored candidate. Thus it was that the priesthood kept its ranks free from all slaves and workers.

"But you, my son, we shall gladly welcome," Vatel assured him, "for you have won our respect, and you have earned promotion by your skill in our laboratories. In a few days, you may begin the initiations."

Overjoyed, Davis told Pe-Ra. But as yet he did not dare even to hint to her why he was taking this step.

Nor did she give any indication that she understood his motives. "I shall lose a faithful slave," she said with a hint of sadness. Then in a worried tone, "And I shall fear for you at every turn. Death is the penalty for the slightest misstep."

Quite evidently she did not know that the tests were all a fake for those whom the hierarchy favored.

Yet in spite of Davis's confidence that this was so, the fears of both Pe-Ra and Miguel began to play on his nerves. Vatel set a date three days off for the initiation, and Davis spent as much of the interim as possible in the company of Pe-Ra. Clung to her almost, with a growing horror of never seeing her again.

CHAPTER III

Rites of the Priesthood

ON the day set for the commencement of the rites, he came clad only in a loin-cloth to an appointed spot in one of the groves, where stood a group of priests all in full regalia of lacquered headdress and feathered cape. There old Vatel broke the glad tidings that he had thoughtfully picked Cumcuz as "conductor" to lead Davis safely through the seven ordeals.

The two young men glared at each other. Then the initiation began.

First, the entire gathering of priests prostrated themselves, and prayed to the flaming sun.

Then Vatel announced, "The first degree, O David, is one of purification and preparation. As soon as we priests withdraw, you must embark upon a pilgrimage. You must cross a river of mud, and a river of blood, and then successively traverse four roads: one white, one red, one green, and one black. At the end of the black road, you will find us awaiting you. May the spirit of Ra go with you."

The priests then withdrew, all except Cumcuz. He grinned maliciously and shrugged his shoulders. "Go ahead," he commanded.

"But how?" asked Davis. "You are supposed to tell me what to do."

Cumcuz shrugged again. "Yes. But, if I do *not* instruct you, how can you prove that I didn't? It will merely be the word of a slave against the word of a priest."

"All right," Davis retorted, his eyes snapping. "But let me warn you that if I get through these seven ordeals alive, I'm going to take this out of you."

Cumcuz shrugged again. "I shall not worry. There's not a chance for you, without my help."

"Okeh. Where is the river of mud?"

"It's up to you to produce it," replied Cumcuz. Then bit his lip.

"*Produce* it, eh?" said Davis to himself. Then aloud, "Very well. Come on."

So he strode out of the grove to one of the nearby ploughed fields. A native woman was passing by, carrying an urn of water. Davis hailed her, and seized her urn. Pouring the water on the ground, he waded in the resulting mud, and then turned toward his conductor, with a malicious gleam in his eye.

"Now lend me the sword which hangs at your side," he requested, "and we'll '*produce*' a river of blood for me to wade in."

Cumcuz paled and fell back a pace.

"Aha!" laughed Davis. "So I've guessed right again! You ought to practice poker, my friend." Then, with a sudden leap, he flung himself upon his enemy, knocking off the latter's red helmet, and forcing him backward.

But Cumcuz drew his blade and lunged. Then the two of them went down together in a heap. An instant later the copper sword had been wrenched from its owner's grasp, and Davis sat astride his rival, thoroughly enjoying the other's terror. Then he noticed the blood streaming from a wound in his own left arm.

"Don't be afraid," he laughed. "The river of blood has arrived without your help."

He arose and permitted Cumcuz too, to scramble to his feet.

Dripping quite a puddle of blood in one spot, Davis paddled around in it with his bare feet for a moment, and then announced, "Both rivers have now been crossed, Cumcuz. Where are the four paths?"

"Find them for yourself," growled the young Mayan, picking up his conquered headdress and dusting it off.

"Oh, very well," replied Davis, suddenly remembering the supposed putting-green, which he had seen on the day of his arrival. "You run home and change. Your pretty cape is filthy. I'll manage, without your help."

THEN contemptuously tossing the copper sword back to its owner, he set out on a dog-trot toward the white sand road, and the red clay road, and the bit of carefully tended green lawn, and the road of black cinders. At the end of the black road, he found awaiting him thirteen priests, now wearing masks, instead of headdresses.

"Where is your conductor?" asked the priest on the extreme left, in a voice which Davis recognized as that of Vatel.

"I'm sorry, sir," he replied, "but I accidentally splashed some mud and blood on him, and so he's gone home to change."

"You did not need to cut yourself quite so badly," remarked Vatel solicitously. "Well, to proceed. Bow low in reverence before the King." As Vatel said this, he indicated the central figure of the thirteen. Cleverly disguised though it was, this central figure was quite evidently not a living man, but rather an image of wood.

Weak from loss of blood, indignant at the treacherous treatment which Cumcuz had accorded him, Davis felt a sudden flare-up of sturdy Americanism. Commit idolatry? Never!

"I'll not do it!" he shouted defiantly.

To his intense surprise, a murmur of approval ran through the priests, and Vatel asserted, "Well spoken, my son. Thus do you show your discernment that this is but a statue of wood, and not a king." A pause. Then, "Now salute each priest in turn, and by name."

Davis stared at the twelve masked men. Except for slight differences in height, they were identical in appearance. They wore identical masks and feathered capes and knee-length skirts. Doubtless Cumcuz had been supposed to inform him as to their names and order of arrangement.

And then he noticed the splay-feet of the fourth priest from the left. And a bit of hushy black beard projecting below the mask of the fifth. The voice of the one on the extreme left had been that of Vatel.

A silly tune began to ring in Davis's ears. A ribald verse which Pe-Ra, the beautiful, had taught him. How did the words go?

"First Vatel, white-bearded, whom I adore;

Then sour old Coh, who's a bully and a bore;

Then Petl, who has that big wart on his nose;

Then Poco, who waddles, with broad duck-like toes;

And Ixl, whose beard is as black as a crow; . . . "

And so on. Bowing low before the high priest, Davis said, "Vatel, I salute you."

Then rapidly he saluted Coh, Petl, Poco, Ixl, and the rest in order. As he finished, Cumcuz in a clean cape and skirt joined the group. He scowled blackly, as Davis flashed him a look of triumph. So far, so good.

"And now, my son," announced old Vatel, pointing to an ornately carved stone chair, "we invite you to take the seat of honor amongst us."

Tired and faint though he was, Davis hesitated. Ought he to accept or decline the proffered seat? Instinctively his eyes sought those of Cumcuz, but that individual merely shrugged his shoulders. No help lay in that quarter.

Perhaps someone planned to pull the chair out from under him, although it looked solid enough. Davis walked slowly around it, to make sure. And as he passed behind it, he saw a cavity beneath the seat, filled with glowing coals.

Turning toward Cumcuz with an exaggerated bow, he said, "My conductor, in gratitude for all that you have done for me this day, I yield the seat of honor to you."

The sarcasm in his tone was lost on all but Cumcuz, who muttered, "That's not the answer which I told him."

"No?" asked Vatel mildly. "But it will serve. The important thing is that he should decline to sit in the presence of his betters."

THE twelve priests then unmasked. The first degree of the initiation was

at an end. Vatel outlined for him the six remaining degrees, concluding with: "If you fall in any test, you must be put to death in the morning. Think you that you can survive these ordeals?"

"I can try," he replied.

On his return to his quarters, Miguel bound up his lacerated arm, and he was permitted a brief rest.

Just before sunset, he was led out again for the second ordeal, "The House of Darkness." This was a small stone hut, heavily guarded, in which he was told he must spend the night. A lighted pine torch was presented to him with much ceremony, and he was instructed to return it *unconsumed* in the morning. Also he was told *not* to extinguish it.

Here was a dilemma! If he put out the flame, he would be put to death for disobedience. But, if he didn't put out the flame, the torch would become consumed, the test would fail, and he would be put to death for his failure. Moodily he stuck the butt-end of the torch into the dirt floor in the middle of the hut, and sat staring at it, hoping for an idea. There must be some very simple solution, which Cumcuz was supposed to have imparted to him.

He hoped that the torch would blow out of its own accord. But the night was calm, and the flame burned steadily, without even a flicker. Besides, if the wind were to blow it out, how could he prove that he had not put it out himself?

As he sat thus in growing despair, Cumcuz in full regalia entered the hut to gloat over him. "Stand up in the presence of your betters," growled the soldier-priest.

Goaded to desperation, Davis sprung upon his tormentor for the second time that day. And this time he succeeded in seizing the wrist of Cumcuz, just as the latter was drawing his sword.

Wrenching the blade from him, Davis drove him into one corner.

Noticing how Cumcuz avoided the flaring torch as he backed into the corner, Davis snatched it up with his left hand, and began to poke it at the edges of the priest's precious feather cape; until Cumcuz suddenly grabbed the brand and extinguished it against the dirt floor.

Davis burst into an hysterical laugh of relief. "My second ordeal is solved," he cried. "The torch is out, and yet I did not extinguish it."

But Cumcuz was rapidly recovering his poise. "How can you prove that you didn't?" he sneered. "It will be merely the word of a slave against the word of a priest."

At that instant, several figures darkened the doorway. The guard. "O Sir!" exclaimed one of them, addressing Cumcuz with evident concern, "are you all right? We heard sounds of a scuffle, and saw you snatch the torch from the neophyte, and extinguish it against the dirt of the floor."

Thus Davis had his witnesses!

"There was no scuffle," Cumcuz haughtily asserted. "It was all a part of the ritual." Then with dignity he withdrew.

DAVIS curled up in a corner and laughed himself to sleep. In the morning, when the priests came, he presented the unburnt torch to Vatel, and explained that a friend had extinguished it for him.

Having had a good night's rest, he spent most of the next day in the company of Pe-Ra, who seemed much pleased that he had progressed thus far in safety. Yet it was a sober day for both of them, the girl being oppressed by general forebodings, and the young man by the very definite knowledge that Cumcuz, supposedly his friend and ad-

visor, could be depended upon to gum the works at every step. Davis refrained from telling Pe-Ra of the treachery of Cumcuz; for an exaggerated American idea of fairplay kept him from whining.

That evening there began the third degree, "The House of Spears." The idea was for the candidate to spend the night in another small stone hut. He was adjured to communicate with no one, and to accept aid from no one. He must not leave the hut. And yet he must produce during the night four pots of flowers, namely: a white daisy, a red cactus, a grass flower, and a black indian-pipe.

To add to his difficulties, he would be attacked by an expert spearman, against whom he would have to defend himself with like weapon. And he knew nothing about spearmanship!

Cumcuz was to be his opponent. Old Vatel whispered this to him, with the evident intention of reassuring him.

As soon as Davis had been led to "The House of Spears," and the senior priests had prayed to the setting sun and had withdrawn, Cumcuz appeared, stripped to the waist, carrying two spears and eager to get on with the test. He handed one of the spears to Davis, and ordered him to guard himself. Then they crossed weapons in the gathering darkness.

Undoubtedly Cumcuz could have impaled his opponent at the very start, but he preferred to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse. This hut was considerably larger than "The House of Darkness" had been, and Cumcuz drove Davis slowly backward round and round the enclosure, occasionally ostentatiously pricking him with the copper spear-tip. Try as Davis would, he could not come anywhere near touching the warrior.

Finally Cumcuz, with an adroit twist,

wrested the weapon from Davis's hands. Exhausted, Davis staggered back into a corner, and spread his arms against the walls to steady himself. His enemy with weapon poised, calmly surveyed him.

As Davis gathered his courage for one frantic hare-handed spring at his armed adversary, his fingers touched a loose stone in the wall against which he leaned. With a pretended sob, as of terror, he turned his face toward the wall and cowered against it. Then, tearing the stone from its place with both hands, he wheeled suddenly and flung it in the face of the startled Mayan.

Unexpected though this maneuver was, it did not take Cumcuz wholly by surprise. His spear had already been raised for a drive, and drive it he did, straight at the neophyte.

But the swing of Davis's body, as he cast the stone, carried him down out of range. The spear passed just above his left shoulder, grazing him with its shaft.

The stone struck Cumcuz in the chest, spilling him over backward, and in an instant Davis had leaped astride of the prostrate form. His rival was at his mercy! But to kill Cumcuz might spoil everything. Davis must continue the initiation, and let Cumcuz live.

As the Mayan groaned for breath, Davis tore strips from the skirt of Cumcuz and securely bound the latter's hands and feet; then trussed him up with the shaft of a spear beneath his knees and above his elbows, gagged him, and rolled him over into a corner.

As soon as Cumcuz became conscious again, Davis began prodding him with the point of the other spear, to induce him to produce the four pots of flowers. But the fellow certainly had courage, for he refused to talk. So finally Davis desisted, and sat down in another corner to think. How could he produce

four particular kinds of flowers, before morning, and without leaving the hut, or accepting help from anyone, or even communicating with anyone?

At last an idea came. The fact that he had been forbidden to leave or to accept outside aid pointed clearly to the probability that the flowers were somewhere within the hut. But where?

It was now too dark for him to make any systematic search. He must therefore stay awake, and begin hunting for the concealed flowers before the priests came in the morning.

The next thing that he knew, it was daylight. Cumcuz lay asleep, trussed up in one corner.

In an instant Davis was wide awake. Frantically he stared about his prison.

His eyes fell upon the niche from which he had wrenched the stone to throw at Cumcuz. And there stood four potted plants, with white, red, green, and black flowers respectively! Saved!

This, then, was the meaning of the loose stone! This, then, was the secret which his conductor was supposed to have revealed to him.

WITH a broad grin, he took out the four pots, and replaced the stone. Then he wakened and unbound his victim.

"Get out of here," he commanded, "before Vatel comes and finds that you have been cheating me."

Perhaps he was being a quixotic fool not to expose his rival, and thus secure a new conductor. But, on the other hand, Cumcuz might succeed in avoiding the accusations, and might even cause the initiation to stop. Better to continue as at present than to attempt the dubious course of making accusation against a favored votary of the flaming god.

The priests arrived, and the flowers

were duly presented.

Again Davis spent the day with Pe-Ra, and again he refrained from telling the girl about the perfidy of Cumcuz. But, feeling the pressing need of some confident, he did tell Miguel, first pledging him to silence. Of course, he did not reveal any of the details of the initiation, but merely that Cumcuz had been double-crossing him.

Pe-Ra seemed very close to Davis that day. They talked of the outer world from which he had come, and of the luxuries and beauties which it held.

"I wish that I could see it," breathed Pe-Ra wistfully.

Forgetting his menial position, he replied, "You could, dear, if—"

Instantly she drew away from him, exclaiming, "Who are you, a mere slave, to address thus Pe-Ra, direct descendant of the sun-god himself? I shall tell my grandfather, and he will punish your insolence, and put a stop to your initiation." She stamped her bare little foot in a rage.

Davis, too, lost his temper. "I dare you to tell your grandfather!" he exclaimed. "If you don't tell him, I will."

"Thus repeating the insult?"

Instantly he sobered. "No. I shan't subject you to that. I know what! Tonight is 'The House of the Tiger.' I'll let the tiger eat me, and thus put an end to all your annoyance."

She grinned impishly. "You have your dates mixed. Tonight is 'The House of Ice.'"

"Very well, then," he retorted. "I'll freeze to death."

"I wouldn't, if I were you," she advised him. Then sobering, "But just the same, you've bitterly insulted me. I'll walk home alone."

He did not see her again that day.

That evening the priests led him to "The House of Ice," a small hut of hollow tile, close to the face of the cliff.

From a frigid mountain torrent a sluice was arranged so that icy water could be diverted at will, to circulate through the tiles. Into this hut Davis crawled through a small low opening, which was then blocked by closely-mortised pieces of brick. The interior was so small that he could not even stand erect.

As the last block was slid into place, old Vatel informed him jovially, "All you have to do, my son, is to keep from freezing to death."

It was hot and stuffy inside; probably the danger was of some other sort.

Then he heard the swishing of water through the tiles. The stored-up heat rapidly departed. In a few moments it was positively chilly.

He tried to exercise, but the small size of his prison cramped him so as to render exercise impossible. Soon he was exhausted, and the place kept on getting colder and colder. He tried to roll himself into a ball, so as to conserve as much as possible of his body heat, but wherever his naked skin touched the tiles the cold became almost unbearable.

At last his hands and feet became numb. The numbness spread.

With a tremendous effort of will, he strove to think. Let's see, nothing had been said about his having to stay in this "House of Ice." Perhaps he could dislodge some of the doorway bricks and crawl out, before it was too late. So he groped about, in a half-hearted attempt at finding where the entrance had been.

But his fingers proved too numb. After all, it was not as cold in there as he had thought. He was coxy and warm now; he dropped off to sleep.

HOURS later he awakened in pitch darkness. The air about him was close and stuffy; his body felt cramped

and lame; his mind was in a daze.

He stretched out one arm; his fist struck against hard stone. He sat up abruptly; his head bumped a splitting blow. Instantly his mind cleared. He knew now where he was, he was in "The House of Ice," and he had not died—yet.

Voices approached. He heard Vatel exclaim in a tone of dismay, "The bricks of the doorway are intact! He is dead! Are you sure that you told him the secret of how to dislodge them?"

Then the oily voice of Cumcuz, protesting that he had most certainly done so, but that the neophyte had proved to be very slow at understanding.

"Such a stupid fool as he would have been no credit to the priesthood," concluded Cumcuz smugly.

Then a third voice, exclaiming, "Look, someone has turned off the sluice."

Then Cumcuz remonstrating, "If he lives because of the help of friends, it ought not to count."

"If he lives, he lives," asserted Vatel. "All that the ordeal of 'The House of Ice' calls for, is that the candidate survive."

The bricks of the door were then removed, and David Davis crawled out to salute the rising sun.

Cumcuz, with a bitter scowl, walked away, but the others all warmly congratulated the neophyte.

"Why did you not remove the bricks?" complained old Vatel with real concern in his voice. "Did not Cumcuz explain it to you?"

"Yes," lied Davis, "he did." Then a bit maliciously, remembering his rival's comments about him, "But he's not much good as an explainer."

"Should you like someone else as your conductor for the remaining three ordeals?" asked Coh.

For a moment, tired and discour-

aged, Davis was tempted to agree. Then his sporting instinct asserted itself. He would beat Cumcuz at his own game. He would see this thing through to the finish. Setting his jaw, he replied, "I prefer to depend on Cumcuz. He has been a great help and inspiration to me."

A warm bath and breakfast put him in shape again. Then, to his joy, Pe-Ra requisitioned him for a walk. For a while they strode on in silence; it was good just to be tolerated, after their spat the day before.

Finally the girl inquired, "How did you succeed last night?"

"Not very well," Davis replied a bit bitterly. "I made a flop of what I was supposed to do. But some friend turned off the ice-water, and thus saved my life."

"It was I," she asserted with a smile.

He halted and stared at her. "You!" he exclaimed. "Then you really would care if I were to be killed?"

She scornfully tossed her head. "Now don't be disrespectful again. It is merely that I owe a certain loyalty to a member of my retinue."

Davis grimaced. Then changed the subject. "But how did you know what to do?"

"Quite simple," she replied. "From Miguel's secretive attitude I gathered that Cumcuz wasn't—well—being as helpful to you as he might. So I sounded Cumcuz out, and he told me that this 'House of Ice' ordeal was the simplest of the seven, and that he had carefully explained to you what to do; but that you were too stupid to understand, and so would freeze. As soon as he had gone, I sneaked out in the moonlight, and diverted the sluice. Simple, wasn't it?"

"I owe you my life!" said Davis devoutly. "Weren't you afraid that the

monsters would come from the jungles across the lake, and catch you in the darkness?"

"Certainly not!" she began, "for I, like Grandfather, know that—Oh, but I mustn't tell you, for it's a secret."

THAT evening began the fifth ordeal, namely "The House of the Tiger."

To Davis's surprise, Cumcuz seemed quite friendly to him, saying, "I am truly repentant that I have not helped you as I was supposed to do. I was jealous of you. Now, however, I realize how I have wronged Pe-Ra in this, for such a noble lady could not be interested in a mere slave. She has at last definitely promised to marry me, and has asked me as a special favor to play square with you from now on."

"Very kind of her, I'm sure," growled Davis.

"And so," the handsome Mayan suavely continued, "I shall now tell you how to survive the ordeal of the Tiger. You will be locked into a prison, surrounded by four cages. The only way out is through a cage; but do not try to escape, or you will be devoured. Finally the grating to one of the cages will open. When that happens, you must rush in past the tiger. In the right-hand far corner, you will find a sword and a net. These weapons will enable you to kill the tiger, and then escape through the rear door of his cage."

Davis thanked his informant civilly enough; but kept his fingers crossed, remembering: "Fear the Greeks, even when they bear gifts."

The usual preliminary prayers were said, and the novitiate was led to a square flat-roofed stone building, with four L's. At the end of each of these L's there was a closed heavy wooden door, but the party did not attempt to enter through any of these. Instead

they mounted the roof by means of ladders.

Vatel explained, "To pass this test satisfactorily you must get out of this house through the door in the rear of one of the tiger-cages. If necessary and convenient, you may kill one of the tigers."

Then in the exact center of the roof, the priests removed a trap-door, and lowered Davis into the dark depths below.

As he passed down through the opening, his conductor leaned toward him and whispered in a voice quite audible to all the surrounding priests, "Remember! Don't open any of the gratings. Wait for one of them to be opened for you. Especially don't open two of them."

Davis's feet touched the floor. The cover was slammed shut above him.

In the dim evening twilight he could see that the central portion of the building, in which he now stood, had a barred door in the center of each of its four walls. Walking over to one of the gratings, he peered through it. Inside the cage, pacing up and down, was a huge jaguar. The beast trotted up, sniffed at him, and tentatively extended a paw.

Davis peered past the tiger. In the gathering gloom he couldn't see the coveted weapons. Perhaps, however, this was the wrong cage; so he peered through the bars of each of the others in turn. Like the first, each held a jaguar; but it was too dark to make out anything else.

As he was studying the last of the cages, the grating which separated it from his room began slowly to rise. Then, with a roar, the beast came charging out.

Davis stood still, until the jaguar was almost upon him; then sidestepped nimbly to the shelter of the dividing wall. The beast's rush carried it well

into the center room, and before it could turn, Davis had darted through the cage-opening.

But there was no net and no sword in the right far corner!

Perhaps he had remembered wrong. Perhaps Cumcuz had said the *left* far corner. But there were no weapons there either.

He turned to face the jaguar, now crawling stealthily back toward him. And as he gazed, fascinated, at this approaching menace, his glance lifted for a moment, and he saw that the grating of the opposite cage was slowly rising. In a few minutes he would have two fierce carnivores at his throat.

The parting words of the treacherous Cumcuz flashed into his mind: "Don't open any of the gratings. . . . Especially don't open *two* of them." These words, spoken loudly enough to be heard by the priests of Ra, were to be Cumcuz's alibi. Everyone would believe that Davis had become rattled, had misunderstood the very clear directions, and *had* opened two of the doors himself, instead of waiting for *one* door to be opened for him. Undoubtedly the net and the sword had been carefully placed in one of the *other* two cages.

Well, there was nothing to do now but face the oncoming death with bare hands, and pray for some lucky break.

THE jaguar sprang! As it hurtled through the air, Davis ducked and flattened himself upon the ground, with the result that the beast crashed its head against the wall, momentarily stunning it. As the man scrambled to his feet, the second jaguar charged.

This time Davis was unable to avoid the rush, and went down.

As he came to his senses again, one of the two beasts was crouching near by, but seeming hardly to notice him. Much relieved, he rose unsteadily to his

hands and knees, and started to crawl slowly away. But at this, the jaguar pounced upon him, and rolled him over and over very roughly several times with its paws. Then it resumed its nonchalant crouch.

The cat-and-mouse game; there was no chance of escape! But Davis's mind had sufficiently cleared by now, so that he had sense enough not to play any such game. Instead he stretched himself out on the floor, covered his face with his arms, and lay as quiet as possible.

For a time the huge carnivore acted completely oblivious of his presence; then it arose majestically, stretched itself, and poked him roughly with one paw.

But just at this juncture a change came over the beast. It planted its forepaws on its victim, it stiffened, it bristled, it raised its massive head aloft, it growled.

Surreptitiously uncovering his face, Davis glanced around. The second jaguar was crawling slowly toward them. With a roar, it sprang; and in an instant the two beasts were rolling over and over on the floor in each other's grasp, scratching and biting and snarling.

Davis rose cautiously to his feet, but the warring great cats paid him no attention. Slowly he tiptoed along the wall. Groping, he found the door. Passing his hands frantically up and down its surface, he located each of the huge bolts which held it, and shot them back one by one. The door swung open. In an instant he was outside in the dim blue tropical twilight, and had slammed and bolted the door behind him, while still the great cats fought for the victim which had escaped them.

He had passed the fifth ordeal. Cumcuz had overplayed. Davis limped home to bed.

HE overslept in his own comfortable quarters, missed morning sunworship, and finally limped out to find all the household lamenting his untimely decease. He claimed that the loosing of the two tigers had been a bright idea of his own; and Cumcuz did not dispute him.

Pe-Ra was much embarrassed at being caught red-eyed and weeping, and refused to have anything to do with him. Furthermore Davis had to do penance all day, for missing sunworship.

That evening began the sixth ordeal, "The House of Fire." The idea was for Davis to be shut up securely in a small brick hut, upon which large quantities of dry brush had been piled. The brush was then to be lighted, and the intense heat would roast to a crisp any living thing that remained inside.

After the usual prayers, Vatel admonished the candidate, "The sixth ordeal is trial by fire. You are forbidden to come out through the door of this house until morning. Then you may emerge—if you still live."

As Davis entered the doorway, Cumcuz in full regalia majestically drew near and whispered in his ear, ostensible to give him the instructions which should save him from being roasted alive.

But actually all that the sinister Mayan said was, "This time I give you neither true or false advice. Figure this ordeal out for yourself—if you can."

With a smile, as though thanking his conductor, Davis whispered back, "I have already survived five of the ordeals, by the grace of Ra. If I survive the remaining two, look out!"

"You won't," whispered Cumcuz with a confident grin.

Then the door—a copper door this time—closed upon the American, leaving him in utter darkness.

Presently he heard the crackling of flames. But, suppressing a maniacal desire to beat upon the door and scream, he forced himself to sit calmly down and reason about his predicament.

His mind ran rapidly over the preceding tests. Difficult though each of them had seemed, the solution of each had been absurdly easy. The clue to "The House of Fire" was probably equally simple. Let's see. What had Cumcuz said to him? Cumcuz was a poor poker-player. Davis now ran over the recent words of his rival, but they appeared to hold no clue.

What, then, had Vatel said? "You are forbidden to come out through the door." He had not been forbidden to leave the hut, but merely to leave it *through the door*.

JUMPING to his feet he began searching for some other exit. But by now the walls were far too hot for him to touch, and the darkness was so intense as to preclude exploring them by sight. There was no indication of any crack anywhere except around the copper door, and that means of exit was prohibited.

The heat was rapidly becoming unbearable. Better to lose his priesthood and even Pe-Ra, than to die in this furnace! So he flung himself against the copper door, only to rebound with skin seared and sizzling, where arm and shoulder had momentarily touched the hot metal. Then reeling and gasping, he dropped to the stone floor.

For a short time the flagging remained blessedly cool to his touch, but gradually the hot air descended until even the floor began to turn warm. The air was stifling—almost impossible to breathe. He had to keep his nose very close to the floor, in order to draw breath at all. And, as he lay thus, it seemed to him there was a little breeze!

Instantly his mind became alert. This cool air must come from somewhere in the floor, for on the outside all was flames. Frantically he searched. He found a crack. All around the crack he groped, until he was able to dislodge a small tile. Reaching into the hole thus made, he got a good grip on the edge of a large slab about a yard in diameter, and felt it give. Then, braving the fierce heat of the upper air of his prison, he stood erect, gripped the edge of the slab once more, and raised it from its place. An upward rush of cool invigorating air assailed him.

Dropping prone upon the pavement, he reached down with one arm. A flight of steps!

Down these steps he crawled. No longer did the heat of the fires above disturb him. Down, down, he crawled, until his foot struck water, icy water. There he bathed and drank. Then he crawled back up again, until he reached a level of about the right temperature, where he squatted to await the dawn.

Off and on during the night, he would move a step or two higher, until along toward morning he found himself back in "The House of Fire," now merely comfortably warm. Then he replaced the slab over the mouth of the hidden well, and lay down on the pavement to sleep until the priests came for him at daybreak.

VATEL raised his eyebrows disapprovingly at Davis's scorched arm and shoulder, but nothing was said about it. The candidate had survived the ordeal, and that was all that was required of him.

After sun-worship Miguel salved and bandaged the burns, and then Pe-Ra sent for Davis. "Why have you avoided me?" she asked, although it had been *she* who had avoided *him*.

"Because you are to marry Cumcuz,"

he growled, looking at her eyes.

For a moment she showed surprise, but quickly masked her feelings and said, "What if I am? You are still my slave, and should attend on me."

All that day she kept him busy with tiring tasks, until by evening he would far rather have sought rest in bed than to go on with his initiation. But he had no choice. So once more, for the seventh and last time, he presented himself before Vatel and his gaudily bedecked fellow priests.

The last and final degree was to be "The House of Camazotz, God of Bats."

Said Vatel, indicating a little road leading off through the woods, "This path you must tread alone. It leads to a house of utter horror. Within that house dangers, many and various, will beset you on every side at every hour of the night; but you must walk through them all, to the other end of the house. If you survive, the flaming god himself will come at last in person to greet you. Be not asleep when he comes."

So Davis set out trudging down the little path. But at his side swaggered Cumcuz, his feathered cape thrown back over his broad shoulders, the plumes of his intricately carved red headdress bobbing jauntily.

"I see," Davis drily remarked, "that 'walking alone' does not deprive me of the friendly guidance of my conductor."

"Enough of that!" Cumcuz snarled. "I have come merely to see that you commit no deception. You have been much too clever in the ordeals so far."

"Thanks for the compliment," the American jauntily replied. "I had credited myself merely with good luck."

"The House of the Bat" was a large and rambling building. Davis peered through the door, down a winding pass-

age in the fast fading twilight.

"Well, good-bye," said Cumcuz, with an evil glint in his eye.

Suddenly Davis had a bright idea. Wheeling, he seized Cumcuz by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his skirt and thrust him through the doorway. The Mayan shrieked in terror. Then, as his feet touched the floor just beyond the threshold, a whole section of the floor dropped away, revealing a dark ominous pit.

Davis braced himself against one side of the door-casing, and barely saved Cumcuz from shooting down feet foremost into the hole. Then carefully he hauled the limp and frightened man back across the threshold, and relieved him of his copper sword.

"What's in that hole?" demanded the American, poking his victim with the point of the sword.

"Spears," replied Cumcuz. "Points up." Then opened his mouth as though to call for help.

"None of that!" snapped Davis, giving an extra poke. "Um. So *this* is what 'The House of the Bat' is like. Every move I make, something will fly out and hit me, or collapse, or blow off my bat, just like in 'The Pit' at Coney Island. Well, for once my conductor is going to conduct me. Come on!" And he prodded Cumcuz up to the doorway. "Now," he announced, "take off your fancy hat and cape, and pull out those spears."

WITH much prodding, Davis finally induced Cumcuz to lean over into the hole (while Davis held onto his heels), and uproot the spears one by one. Then the two men crawled down into the hole, and there Davis gagged and trussed Cumcuz securely with strips from the latter's own skirt.

Not once throughout that long night did the American relax his vigilance.

His prisoner, however, slept fitfully.

As soon as the first light of the morning brightened the sky, Davis roused and released his prisoner. "Come on," he said, "and do some more conducting! But no treachery! The first false step, and I shall run this sword into you."

Grumblingly the Mayan acquiesced. Slowly and cautiously he led the way, stepping carefully here, avoiding stepping there, now crouching, now turning some knob or button. And every motion that he made was carefully duplicated by the man who accompanied him.

But Cumcuz had the advantage of knowing thoroughly the route which he was traversing. And so when finally he suddenly leapt forward out of reach of Davis's sword, the latter was taken wholly by surprise. His natural impulse led him to leap after the fleeing Mayan; as he did so, a spear darted out of the wall beside him, at about the level of his waist. A sharp pain shot through his back, as the spear impaled him. Then he fainted from pain and horror.

The next thing that he heard was a kindly voice intoning, "Look up, my son, and behold your God."

So this was Heaven, was it? Davis opened his eyes, but could not look up, for he was suspended somehow by his back, with head and legs both hanging down. He struggled, but could not move. Then he remembered. The spear! He had been impaled by a spear!

White-robed figures crowded about him. Hands fumbled at his bloody loincloth, and undid it. He collapsed to the floor. Hands assisted him to stand. He blinked his eyes again and looked up, straight into the blazing face of the sun, just rising over the crater rim, and shining full upon him through an opening

in the roof of "The House of the Bat." Truly the flaming god had come in person to greet him, and his ordeals were at an end.

"A narrow escape, my son," remarked old Vatel. "Did you forget part of your instructions?"

"Oh, no," Davis glibly replied, "but Cumcuz was walking a bit too fast for me, and I guess I didn't quite keep up with him. But why am I not dead from this spear?"

"Although it cut your back pretty badly," reported the chief priest, "it impaled merely your loin-cloth."

Davis laughed with relief, then scanned the crowd for signs of Cumcuz. But that scoundrel was nowhere to be seen.

Then the priests led the American to the temple, where he was consecrated to the service of Ra, the sun god, and was given a hummingbird cape and lacquer helmet as befitted his new station.

CHAPTER IV

Death Sentence

THE wound in his back laid him up for several days, during which Miguel poulticed him with native herbs, and Pe-Ra came frequently, but rather aloofly, to see him. Finally he was up again, as well as ever.

Unfortunately a coolness seemed to have sprung up between Pe-Ra and him, so that he almost wished that he was back in his old status as her slave. Furthermore his temple-duties now took up far more of his time than any labors which had been imposed upon him while a servant.

Cumcuz, on the other hand, spent more time in the company of the princess than ever before. But why not, since he was affianced to her? And, for that same reason, Davis finally aban-

doned the idea of giving Cumcuz the promised thrashing.

He devoted his efforts to the manufacture of gasoline, and presently had enough stored up in earthenware bottles to fill the tank of his plane. As soon as opportunity should offer, he planned to fly away from this valley, taking his friend Miguel with him. Perhaps in time he could forget the beautiful Pe-Ra.

One evening, about two weeks after he had been elevated to the priesthood of the flaming god, Miguel came to him with the information that Vatel was about to set out on a slaving expedition. Instantly Davis conceived the idea of following the party, in an attempt at finding the ground route which led out of the crater-valley. For, although he was chiefly relying on his plane as a means of escape, it would be well to have other means to fall back upon, should the first choice fail. So, shedding his feathered cap, as his tanned skin would be less conspicuous, Davis sneaked out into the darkness.

The night was overcast. A hot breeze blew steadily through the crater, while overhead a stiffer gale howled among the crags. Noting that the entrance to the temple cave was lighted with flares, Davis crept over to it and hid in a clump of bushes just out of range of the light.

Soon Vatel and nine other important members of the hierarchy emerged, each leading one blindfolded spearman by the arm. All twenty men were inconspicuously clad like Mexican peons. Turning to the left, the party proceeded around the edge of the lake, just where Davis had pursued the child-eating lizard many days ago. Keeping under cover, Davis followed the procession.

Not a beast showed its head. Strange, thought Davis.

Finally the vegetation became so thick that the spy could no longer keep

under cover. So, after giving the expedition sufficient time to get safely ahead, he came out of his hiding and followed in their footsteps.

But as he was sneaking softly along, the moon unexpectedly emerged from the clouds above, and instantly something sprang upon him from behind.

But it was not one of the dinosaur-beasts of this jungle. It was a man. Davis wrenched himself free, and wheeled upon his attacker.

"You?" exclaimed both men simultaneously. Cumcuz in feather cape and lacquered headdress, and Davis naked to the skin, glared at each other in surprise.

CUMCUZ alone was armed, and was quick to take advantage of that fact. Whipping his keen copper sword from its scabbard, he raised it menacingly. Davis, unarmed, had no hope of besting a swordsman. The jungle on each side was too dense for escape. And if he fled down the trail, he would come upon Vatel and his party, and be captured by them.

Besides, what good would either fight or flight do him now? For, unless he killed Cumcuz, Cumcuz could testify to his spying trip. And killing Cumcuz was out of the question, for that would break the heart of Pe-Ra. Accordingly Davis surrendered, and permitted himself to be led back to the settlement, where he was locked in a cell for the night.

The next morning he was dragged before Coh, who was now Acting High Priest in the absence of Vatel. The trial was brief. Cumcuz testified that he had been guarding the departure of the slaving party, lest any unauthorized persons follow them and thus learn of the secret passage out of the valley, and had seen Davis sneaking after them.

Davis did not deny the accusation.

His only defense was that he had as good a right to know this secret as Cumcuz, inasmuch as they were both priests of the same rank. But in this he soon found that he was in error; even Cumcuz was not permitted to go beyond a certain point, and Davis had been about to press on further than that.

So the verdict of grim old Coh was "guilty"; and the sentence was "death," death in true Mayan fashion by having his heart ripped out on the altar of the flaming god. For, although human sacrifice *as such* was prohibited, the sacrifice of criminals was still permitted.

The execution was set for sunrise the following morning, to take place in the presence of the entire community. The convicted man asked to be permitted to say good-bye to Pe-Ra and Miguel, his only two friends; but even this was denied him.

"They can see you, when you are stretched on the altar tomorrow morning," Coh grimly declared. "That will be sufficient."

Cumcuz was named to wield the knife upon the sacrificial altar, in special recognition of his service in apprehending the spy. Meanwhile the victim was securely locked in a cell in the deep recesses of the temple cave.

It was dark in the cell, lit only by the vagrant beams of one open-wick crude-oil lamp, hung in the corridor outside. Back and forth in the corridor in front of the cell door there paced a bronzed spearman. About once an hour the guard was changed.

THUS the day dragged on. Sunk in despair, Davis scarcely touched the food which was brought to him, and scarcely heeded the periodic relieving of the guard. It all seemed so unreal! An American citizen about to be offered as a human sacrifice on the altar of the

sun god, by a prehistoric race, within only a few miles of civilization!

His gloomy thoughts were interrupted by a voice. The guard was speaking to him, although in a whisper. "Sir, a life for a life." Davis pricked up his ears. The spearman continued, "You saved my child from the monster; so now I stand ready to save you in turn, if you will tell me how."

Instantly Davis was on the alert, his mind racing. "Can you get word to Miguel, Vatel's slave?"

"Most certainly. I can see him myself as soon as I go off duty here."

"What time is it now?"

"Mid-afternoon."

"Do you come on guard here again?"

"Yes, along toward morning."

"Good!" said Davis. "Then tell Miguel to take my bottles of magic water, which are stored in my quarters, and pour them into my flying dragon. He will know the proper place, for I have coached him. Then tell him to await me, with two capes, helmets, and skirts, near the plane shortly after the time that you come on guard again."

"It shall be done," replied the spearman. "Even though Ra himself blast me for my impiety."

Davis warmly pressed the man's hand through the bars of the cell. Then, gloomy no more, he lay down to rest. Freedom was ahead of him at last!

But soon there came a pang. Freedom meant that he should never again see Pe-Ra. Would life without her be worthwhile? Yes, he reluctantly admitted, it would. Life is always worthwhile, and life without Pe-Ra would be far better than death without her. With these thoughts, he fell into a troubled and nightmarish sleep.

He awoke to the prodding of a spearbutt.

"Get up!" said a voice in the flickering lamp-lit darkness.

Instantly Davis was on his feet. "Yes?" said he.

"The magic water has been fed to your flying dragon," whispered the guard, "and Miguel is here."

"Here?" exclaimed Davis. "But I said for him to meet me at the plane!"

DAVIS looked out into the corridor through the cell door which the guard held open for him. Beyond the door there stood two figures in cape and headdress. And the foremost was that of a small slim man, whom the prisoner did not recognize.

"You are not Miguel!" he exclaimed.

"Who are you?"

"Sh!" replied the unknown. It was the voice of Pe-Ra!

"You?" he cried. "Why did you risk coming here?"

"Because Miguel does not know all the secret passages. But come! There is no time to waste. Put these on, quickly."

So saying, she handed him a headdress and cape and skirt. These he hastily donned.

Then he turned to the guard, and pressed his hand. "But you? How can you ever explain my departure?"

"Say that the flying dragon of the sun-god came and rescued him," Pe-Ra suggested. Then to Davis, "Everyone here, except grandfather, has believed that you might turn out to be Quetzalcoatl, after all. A story of miraculous escape will hold them all until grandfather returns. Then he can be depended upon to protect the guard, and to punish Cob for assuming to deal out death in his absence."

Pe-Ra, Davis, and Miguel—for the other figure was he—hurried off down the corridor. Through many a pitch-dark winding passageway the girl led the two men. Up stairs, down ramps, around corners and through doors

finally emerging from the face of the honeycombed cliff into the star-lit night. Ahead of them lay the rippling lake, beyond it the jungles and black ramparts of the other side of the valley, and above that the greying sky of early morning.

"We must hurry," breathed Pe-Ra, "for the flaming god will soon be here."

At the edge of the lake stood the amphibian plane, but guarded by a spearman! Here was a complication! How could they hope to wrest the plane from this soldier, without his giving the alarm and summoning aid?

Pe-Ra had anticipated this difficulty. Motioning her two companions to remain where they were, she alone approached the spearman.

"Who is there?" he challenged, raising his spear menacingly aloft.

"Know you not Pe-Ra, granddaughter of your High Priest?" she imperiously replied. "Go to your quarters. We three will take your place for the rest of this watch."

Bowing low and saluting, the spearman withdrew. Davis and Miguel hurried forward.

Dawn was rapidly breaking. The blatant notes of the morning gong blared throughout the little valley. Habit-ridden, Pe-Ra and Miguel prostrated themselves upon the sand, facing the rising sun.

For a moment Davis hesitated. Then he too bowed in worship. It was a waste of precious time; but he could not afford to antagonize the religious prejudices of Pe-Ra at this juncture. And so, impatiently, he waited until the whole flaming orb of the sun-god had cleared the further rim of the crater valley.

Then he sprang to his feet, and inspected his plane. Everything appeared to be intact. A strong smell of gasoline pervaded the air. He adjusted his spark

and gas, pumped up his pressure tank, and spun the propellers.

With a few coughs and then a roar, the engine responded. Affrighted, Pe-Ra and Miguel drew back. Then reassured by Davis's fearlessness, they stepped forward again.

Davis motioned the young Mexican to the observer's seat. Then he clasped the girl's hand in both of his. "Good-by, Pe-Ra," he exclaimed in a choking voice. "It must be that you care for me a little, or you would not have risked your own life to save me. Forgive me for telling you again that I love you, and that I shall love you always!"

She looked up at him with tears in her soft brown eyes. Then suddenly she flung her arms around his neck. "David," she breathed, "I love you. Take me with you."

But Miguel cut-in with a warning shout. "Here comes Cumcuz!"

Cumcuz and a squad of spearmen were emerging from the nearby wood on a run.

Pushing Pe-Ra in beside the Mexican, Davis clambered into the driver's seat, accelerated the motor, and piloted the machine along the surface of the lake and then up into the air.

THE engine was functioning perfectly, and he headed across the lake for the opposite rim of the crater, while the outwitted Cumcuz stood on the beach behind, and shook his fist.

"We made it!" Davis shouted.

But his joy was short-lived. His engine sputtered and missed. It was the fatal out-of-gas sound. Instantly he nosed down to the surface of the lake. The plane slid over the water until its prow rested against the jungle shores on the opposite side from the Mayan community. Then he hurriedly inspected his feed-lines.

The trouble was readily evident: a

small nail-hole in the bottom of the gas-tank, which was now bone dry. No wonder Vatel had not been concerned with Davis's distillation of gasoline, for the wily old priest had taken pains to see that the plane should make no getaway until he himself should be ready to use it.

With a few bitter words, Davis told his companions the trouble. Then suddenly he brightened.

"Come on!" he exclaimed. "The secret passage!"

"But the beasts!" Pe-Ra and Miguel objected in unison. At that instant an ugly head, on a long snakelike neck, reared itself out of the water beside them.

"Speak of the devil—," muttered Davis, dealing the creature a blow on the snout with his fist. The reptile hissed and disappeared beneath the waves.

Then a war-canoe rounded one of the islands behind them, with Cumcuz in full regalia in the stern.

But before the canoe came within a hundred yards, a saurian arose from the depths to attack it. Fascinated, Pe-Ra and Davis and Miguel watched the fight, which was long and bloody. The paddlers attacked it with spears and swords, but two were seized and dragged overboard to their deaths before the rest finally overcame it. Then, in spite of threats and maledictions from Cumcuz, the paddlers turned their craft around and departed.

"Saved for the present!" Pe-Ra exclaimed.

"But what good will it do us?" Davis bitterly replied. "We can't go ashore, for fear of the dragons. Eventually your people will recover courage and attack us again."

"They will probably wait until night," the girl asserted, "for Cumcuz knows that the dragons never stay out at night. And so, even if we succeed

in warding off the dragons all day, Cumcuz will surely get us at nightfall."

So *this* was Vatel's secret of the dragons! "We can escape at sundown through the secret passage!" Davis exclaimed.

"Look out!" shouted Miguel.

A snaky head and neck appeared out of the water a short distance away—but did not approach them. Then another and another, until the stranded airplane was surrounded by the prehistoric beasts.

Davis exclaimed in English. "I wish I had my gun!"

Pe-Ra replied in Mayan, "I heard you say 'gun.' Is this what you mean?" And she produced, from beneath the folds of the feather cape which she was wearing, his long-lost automatic. "Vatel left it behind, and I thought you might need it," she explained.

Davis extracted the clip, and looked at it. It was full! With renewed hope and confidence, he replaced the clip, and faced the besieging cordon of beasts.

THE beasts drew slowly nearer. Davis waited until one of them was almost upon him; then fired at its head. Blood spurted from the wound, and the wounded beast and its fellows recoiled and sank beneath the waves.

The day wore on. After an interval, the dinosaurs reappeared, drew nearer, and again were repelled by a single shot from the American automatic.

This performance was repeated again and again.

Finally Davis was reduced to but a single cartridge. Gradually the snaky heads converged all about them, and this time Davis let them converge. But he watched them intently, ever on the alert to shoot when shooting should finally become the only course left open. In fact, he watched the reptiles so in-

tently that he did not notice anything else which was taking place upon the surface of the lake, until Miguel suddenly called out, "Look! Cumcuz is returning!"

The war canoe was again pushing its prow around one end of the nearby island.

Miguel's shout startled the lizard beasts, and several of them rushed forward, but Davis coolly fired his last shot at the nearest, and the whole foul brood sank once more beneath the surface of the little lake. The canoe did not draw any nearer, however.

"They are waiting for the night," the American suggested. "As soon as the sun sets and the dragons retire, Cumcuz plans to rush us."

"If he does," the girl grimly replied, "I hope my grandfather learns of it, for then Cumcuz will meet the fate which he planned for you. It is treason to let the common people know that the dragons are harmless at night."

"Well, they aren't exactly harmless just now," Davis drily remarked, as several black snouts emerged from the water scarcely fifty feet away.

The reptiles were evidently becoming accustomed to his pistol-shots, for this time they had not stayed under water as long as before. And this time there were no bullets left to ward them off.

Nearer and nearer drew the dragons, until at last one of them craned its neck over the cockpit, and made a grab at Pe-Ra. Davis promptly swung his empty automatic, and caught the beast a crushing blow on the end of its ugly snout, at which it recoiled hissing. Then a shriek from the girl, as another reptile reached over and seized Davis's wrist in its teeth. His gun dropped clattering to the deck of the plane, and bounced off into the lake.

He rained blow after blow with his left fist upon the head that held him,

but it refused to let go. Miguel and Pe-Ra could not come to his aid, for they were hard put to it to avoid being seized themselves by the slimy creatures which now began swarming over the disabled plane. And so Davis, fighting and kicking, was slowly hauled out of the cockpit into the water.

"Courage, Pe-Ra!" were his last words, as he was dragged beneath the surface.

He held his breath, until his lungs nearly burst; but just as he could stand the suffocation no longer, the grip upon his wrist let go. He struck out for the surface.

First he drew a long agonized breath; then shook the water from his eyes, and looked around.

"David!" called a glad feminine voice.

Not a reptile in sight! Pe-Ra and Miguel unharmed in the plane! The flaming god had just sunk out of sight behind the cliffs of the Mayan village over across the lake, his red rays painting the face of the wall before them just beyond the jungle. It was night—the beasts were powerless!

With a few swift strokes, Davis reached the plane, and helped Pe-Ra out into the water. The young Mexican followed. In another instant the three of them had scrambled ashore, and were tearing their way through the matted vegetation of the jungle.

THEY found a trail through the bushes. Frantically they followed it. In the deepening twilight they reached a cleft in the face of the cliff. They groped their way in and through.

At last a hot wind blew in their faces, and they looked up upon the starlit sky. They were out of the secret valley at last! Across the barren rocks in front of them there led a well marked trail.

The moon rose. Davis and Pe-Ra

were walking hand in hand, and suddenly he felt her grip tighten in his. They halted.

"Look!" she said, pointing ahead where the trail ran like a silver ribbon, distinct in the moonlight. A party of men, clothed like Mexican peons, were approaching them up the trail. Vatel and his slaving party, returning!

"Down!" whispered Davis, and the three of them dropped to their hands and knees, and then slunk off to one side until they were hidden behind a pile of boulders.

A slight rattle of pebbles behind them caused them to look back. A score of spearmen, led by two men in capes and plumed headdresses, emerged from the cleft in the rock wall, and took cover on each side of the trail.

"An ambush!" whispered Davis. "We must warn Vatel. With all his own spearmen blindfolded, he will be no match for them."

"It will mean slavery again for you, David," the girl whispered back.

"We must warn Vatel!" Davis doggedly repeated, jumping up and racing down the trail.

Pe-Ra and Miguel raced after him, and behind them charged the two renegade priests and their retinue, abandoning their now useless ambush.

Warned in time, old Vatel unblinded his soldiers and his prisoners. He and his nine priests and ten spearmen fearlessly met the onslaught. Davis snatched up a spear, which had been dropped in the first attack, and joined the fray. Miguel rounded up his kidnapped fellow-Mexicans, and led them back to fight for Vatel.

The two leaders of the enemy went down, one of them at a spear-thrust from Davis himself. Their surviving

benchmen fought fiercely, knowing that death on the altar would be the penalty for surrender, but finally the last of them succumbed. Pe-Ra flung herself into her grandfather's arms.

The two slain leaders of the enemy turned out to be Cumcuz and Coh. It was Cumcuz whom Davis himself had killed. Shedding not a tear for the dead, Pe-Ra then explained to her grandfather all that had taken place in his absence.

For their part in the battle, the Mexicans were set free; and, led by Miguel, returned down the trail. Reblindfolding the remaining spearmen, Vatel entered the cleft in the rocks.

Back to the valley again for David Davis, to be immured for the rest of his life, perhaps reduced to slavery again, or even sacrificed to the flaming god, as the penalty for having revealed the secret that the dinosaurs were harmless at night, and for having left the hidden valley without permission!

But Vatel proved grateful and reasonable. "There is no need for my granddaughter to ruin the whole rest of the long life which she has ahead, just to spend a few more years with an old man to whom she has already given so much. So, David, as soon as she can be married to you according to the ancient rites of Ra, take your flying dragon and leave us, as Quetzalcoatl left us, centuries ago. And may the blessings of Ra go with you."

So, in due time, David Davis and his bride flew back to civilization together. One of the other oases which Davis had noted was reported to Erasmus Jordan for colonizing, and the privacy of Vatel's hidden valley remained inviolate.

THE END



WHEN TIME



BY
**EDWIN K.
SLOAT**

R. Fugate—

A terrific thunderbolt came from the tower and struck Mason, tossing him violently into the air

STOOD STILL



Futura held Utopia for Kent, but he had to flee from it to save his country from war, only to find he had been fooled.

CHAPTER I

"It's a Perfect Weapon—"

"THE NEXT forty-eight hours will see thousands of war planes on the wing above Europe," came the gloomy voice of the radio announcer. "Thousands of women and children will die in the raids—"

Kent Rider leaned forward and closed the little window which separated him from the driver of the cab. It was bad enough to have to face the coming holocaust without listening to ghastly predictions. The United States would be drawn into the conflict, and very soon, of course. That brought Kent Rider around to wondering again why the Chief had sent for him. Well, he'd soon find out, for the cab was already drawing up before the entrance.

The outside office of the Intelligence

Bureau was a mad house with frantically working typists, grim-faced aides hurrying in and out on their various errands. With war closing down, the bureau was nearly swamped with work.

The Chief was in his office with his private secretary, Mason, a hatchet-faced, black-eyed man who eyed Kent Rider curiously when he came in, but offered no greeting.

"Have a seat, Rider," said the Chief, without lifting his iron gray head. "You certainly took your time about getting here."

"Took longer than I expected to turn the espionage case over to Merritt," explained Rider, drawing up a chair.

The Chief swiveled about to face him. "You're acquainted with Dr. Dalmetz, aren't you, Rider?"

"Our families were neighbors. My father and the doctor used to sit on the back porch over a bottle of beer and argue, while Dorothy and I played about the yard."

"Do you know where Dalmetz is now?"

Rider shook his head. "Haven't heard anything about him for eight or nine years."

"You've got to find him," said the Chief tersely. "The daughter you mentioned just now is in town. Contact her at once and find out his whereabouts."

"What then?"

"We've got a tip that he's invented a perfect defense weapon against both ground and air attack. If ever America needed such a weapon, we need it now. Dalmetz can name his own price for the thing if it works. Here's the address. The daughter will be either there or at the Ambassador hotel where she's registered. I've had her checked."

He handed Rider the slip of paper. Kent glanced at it and a grin curved his straight lips.

"That's the old home address," he said, and departed.

IN the cab he found himself thinking of Dorothy Dalmetz, of her wide, hazel eyes, her eager smile, and the thick brown mass of bobbed hair that danced crazily about her face when she romped with him among the falling petals under the old apple tree near the garden gate. Or shrieked with youthful abandon in the big rope swing that hung from the massive arm of the gigantic oak near the house. When he'd last seen her, that late summer afternoon, they were older of course, she seventeen, and he eighteen.

He'd called at her back door to give her a kitten, the most peculiarly marked kitten he'd ever seen—all brown and yellow in stripes with a perfect white crescent patterning its fluffy little breast between the forelegs. Dorothy was wild with delight over the kitten, and sad the next moment when he told her that he was leaving for college.

When he came home on his first vacation, the Dalmetz house was closed and he learned that Dr. Dalmetz and his daughter had gone out west somewhere. He'd never heard anything about them since. How long ago it seemed! Eight years. Now Kent was twenty-six, and Dorothy would be twenty-five.

The cab drew up at the curb. Kent Rider got out and told the driver to wait. Then he eyed the big, gloomy house with its dirty, dusty windows like old, dead eyes a long moment, and stared at the choking weeds and shrubbery along the front walk. Doubtfully he moved up the walk to the house, crossed the dusty verandah and rang the door bell. The next instant he stared in startled amazement at the floor of the verandah beside him.

A kitten was playing there, a small yellow and brown striped kitten with a

perfect white crescent on its small fluffy breast between the forelegs. Kent shook his head in wonder. Who in the world would ever have believed that a second kitten like that would have been born?

The door opened. Kent looked up—and gaped.

Dorothy Dalmetz stood before him—not the Dorothy Dalmetz he'd vaguely expected to see, a woman of twenty-five, but the unbelievable, exact image of the Dorothy Dalmetz he'd bid goodbye to eight years ago when he went away to college. She had the same mop of brown hair, the same piquant face, beneath it the same sweet girlish figure. There was the undeniable dewy freshness of girlhood upon her features.

"Kent Rider!" she cried, and impulsively caught his hand in hers. "Where in the world—but how old you look! So, so grown up."

"I ought to—we ought to be," he answered lamely. "It's been eight years, and we're no longer school kids. But I can't get over this kitten. It's so like the one I gave you that last time I saw you."

"So like it?" She laughed delightedly. "Why shouldn't it be? It's the same one."

Kent Rider blinked. A tiny voice in the back of his mind whispered that Dorothy Dalmetz must be crazy—or maybe Kent Rider was. Then he remembered why he was here.

"I must see your dad, Dorothy. Is he home?"

"Yes, but not here. I came back on business." Sadness momentarily clouded her eyes at the thought of it. "Daddy wanted me to turn the house over to the United Charities as a gift while I am here. There were a few old keepsakes I wanted, and I have been gathering them. What did you want to see Daddy about?"

"I'm with the government, and

wanted to ask him about some invention he's said to have perfected. Perhaps you know something about it?"

SHE shook her head. "There have been so many inventions I wouldn't know which one you referred to. If you really want to see Daddy, though, you'll have to go fifty miles southwest of the ghost town of Broken Point in the Devil's Hinge Mountains of Arizona, and be there at 10 o'clock day after tomorrow morning. I know he'll be glad to see you again, because we were talking about you only last week. You'll have to come by plane."

He stared hard at her. Again the tiny voice in his mind was insisting that she must be crazy, or that something was crazy. He made her repeat the directions.

"If I'm not there, just go on in," she said in parting. "I'll be there very shortly, and I'll see you then. Goodby till then, Kent."

As the cab rolled swiftly back to the Bureau, Kent timed his pulse experimentally by his wrist watch and pressed a palm against his forehead. Both seemed normal. It couldn't be his health then, but he felt dazed, somehow, felt awestruck.

When he was again closeted with the Chief, and Mason the Chief's secretary, Kent related how he'd met Dorothy and repeated her unusual directions if he was to get in touch with Dr. Dalmetz. But Kent made no mention of the kitten or of the girl's extraordinary youth. He knew that the directions were enough in themselves to make the Chief snort, and they did.

"If it wasn't for your record, Rider, I'd think you'd been drinking. Devil's Hinge Mountains! Never heard of 'em. But things are looking worse than ever overseas, so we'll have to take a chance that you know what you're talking

about. I'll order a pursuit ship from the Army and you can fly yourself to this outlandish contact. Report back as soon as possible."

As Rider left the office he caught a glimpse of Mason staring at him curiously and wondered why. Then impatiently he dismissed the secretary from his thoughts.

CHAPTER II

"Welcome to Futura!"

THE Devil's Hinge Mountains proved to be a naked, sun-stricken mass of rock that humped in a gigantic purple fold high into the glaring sky. Only skimpy growths of cactus and sage gave evidence of any life on the ground far below, Kent Rider saw. He was as near fifty miles southwest of the ghost town of Broken Point as he could figure and it was 10 o'clock in the morning, but of the presence of Dr. Dalmetz—or any other human being for that matter—there was not the slightest indication.

Dorothy Dalmetz had tricked him, Kent told himself savagely. He'd been right in the first place. This whole business was screwy.

Then he caught sight of a white dot far to the east above the barren foothills, a dot almost on a level with himself. As he stared it grew swiftly into a white, low wing cabin plane, beading almost directly for him. It passed within fifty feet of him, and he glimpsed Dorothy Dalmetz seated beside the pilot, waving at him through the window.

Kent, swerving his ship to follow, saw something he had previously missed: a deep sheltered valley in the heart of the purple, lifeless range ahead, a valley of luscious green vegetation, a lake of water gleaming like a new dime in the sunlight, and beyond the lake some kind of a town with white buildings. He

wondered vaguely how the valley had escaped his attention before.

Then Dorothy's plane began to drop swiftly down the invisible slope above the foothills, a long glide that brought it up safe and sound on the velvety green grass between the lake and the town. Kent followed, coming to rest smoothly.

As he cut the motor he saw Dorothy running toward him across the close-clipped grass, while the pilot of her ship strode away in the opposite direction.

"I got here in time, after all!" she exclaimed, as she came up to Kent. "Welcome Kent, welcome to Futura!"

The glowing eagerness of her voice made him feel all warm inside. Somehow it was like coming home to have her greet him like this.

"I—" he began, and broke off—staring beyond her.

What on earth were those huge mechanical things coming across the tarmac toward him. Yet he knew what they must be, even as he asked himself the question. Only robots, mechanical, steel men, could look like that, with those box-like chests, turret heads, their skeleton steel arms swinging freely as they shuffled along on steel feet, padded so as not to damage the bright green grass of the tarmac. Dorothy turned her head, saw them, laughed delightedly.

"Don't be frightened, Kent. They're just some of my friends. I'll introduce you."

As the inanimate quartet shuffled up, the girl spoke to the leading figure.

"Rusty, I want you to meet Kent Rider, an old friend."

The robot extended a hand that was all jointed steel, with knife blades, corkscrews and padded digits for fingers, and a massive steel thumb. Kent hesitated, appalled by the thought of his own hand being crushed in such a

vice, then accepted the hand shake. It was as light and gentle as a child's, with its aid he stepped from his own ship.

"And this is Steely," the girl continued. "This one is Smoothie, and last of all comes Clanky. Clanky," she explained, laughing, "gets his name because he has a loose bolt in him that clanks when he walks."

THE robots acknowledged the introduction with metallic grunts from their grid mouths, then went placidly about the business of pushing the planes across the open ground to a hangar built in the hillside with silvery doors and handles on them that were so ornate Kent found himself thinking of fairy castles in a musical film. And he could scarcely credit his eyes when he saw how marvelously and efficiently the steel men performed.

Then he turned and for the first time got a good view of the waiting city, or town. His first impression was that of a vast palace out of a fairy tale, towering high with its turrets gleaming gold and crimson above the ivory white of the walls. All about its base were palm trees, and scattered among them were exquisite little dwellings like tourist cabins, bright and attractive with flower boxes, climbing vines and odd little curving walks.

Between the tarmac and the vast central hall, or palace, was a large plaza floored with a mosaic of colored tile or rock. In the center of this plaza stood a big circular stately fountain with sculptured walls about it, and a green mossy group of figures in the center, nude, girlish figures, Kent saw at second glance, with imitation water jars on their shoulders out of which sprayed whispering, glittering drops of water that tinkled musically into the pool.

A cloud of white doves wheeled suddenly from one of the high turrets, flut-

tering down to the mosaic floor of the plaza to eat of grain or something lying there.

As they cooed and picked, a couple, apparently a boy of seventeen or eighteen, and a girl companion, strolled out of a side path arm in arm eating grapes and laughing. Instantly the cloud of doves lifted on a muted thunder of wings to circle over the palms and back up to the roof of the central hall.

Kent stared at the couple. Their sun-bronzed youthful limbs were bare below the snowy white shorts they wore, and white sandals covered their feet. They crossed the plaza and disappeared among the palms on the opposite side.

Turning to Dorothy, Kent said, "Futura? What does it mean?"

"It's our valley, our settlement. Here you see Daddy's dream, the achievement of his life's ambition. Some day, all of the human race will live like this—when men finally begin to master their greed and educate their minds to use intelligently the marvelous advances science has already made, instead of thinking only to put new inventions and discoveries to use as a method of amassing money, or killing all the people you can in the next country.

"But that will take a long time, and Daddy says we couldn't wait until it came along. So he founded this place, our little island of the future right here in the present. Don't you think it's beautiful?"

"Beautiful? Why, it's the loveliest place I ever saw in my life!" exclaimed Kent, his eyes shining. "But what will happen some day when an airliner gets off its regular route and the pilots spot this place? You'll be overrun with nosy tourists."

She shook her head and laughed. "No pilot or anyone else will see this place."

Kent was about to ask her why, when

he caught sight of her yellow and brown kitten scampering ahead of them with a stray leaf in its mouth. A startling thought struck him.

"Dorothy, just how old were those two kids we saw crossing the plaza a moment ago?"

"Twenty-five or twenty-six. They've been married at least five years. He works in the medical laboratory, and she teaches the children in the pottery moulding class."

"But they look to be only seventeen or so."

"I know," she nodded. "That was their age when they first came to Futura with the rest of us."

"You mean they were rejuvenated?"

"No. No one here is ever any younger than he was when he came in. He can't be. The ray treatment of the ductless glands—I can't tell you just how it works, but Daddy, of course, knows—arrests growth at the point in life it is given. After that you never grow any older. It's Daddy's idea. Years ago he read in a newspaper of the case of a girl who never grew beyond the age of ten years either physically or mentally, although she lived to be more than thirty years of age. Glandular trouble halted her development at the age of ten and there she remained. Daddy was already interested in the experiments of X-rays upon fruit flies and saw a connection between the two. His experiments with insects and guinea pigs were so successful he is now able to treat humans."

"Will the people in Futura live forever?"

"The experiment hasn't been in effect long enough to show whether life is lengthened or not. Daddy thinks that our average life span will be lengthened somewhat, but that death will be inevitable as always. At least as long as we live we shall be young in body and

in heart. I am actually twenty-five years old, but my body and spirit are seventeen and will never be more. My month-old kitten there trying to catch the butterfly is actually eight years old."

Kent stared at the scampering kitten a long moment then he spoke wonderingly. "In other words, time stands still in Futura."

"Why that's a beautiful way of saying it, Kent!" cried the girl. "I had never thought of putting it that way before. But let me tell you more about ourselves."

THE robots were not the accomplishment of Dr. Dalmetz, she said, but of Lohrman, the famous European scientist. He was one of the several world famous scientists who had thrown their lot in with Dr. Dalmetz's plan of the city of the future. These robots performed all the hard manual labor, the tilling of crops in the valley, the erecting of buildings, and even the excavating of the little artificial lake at the bottom of the valley where the river was shunted into an underground cave after serving the dwellers of Futura.

Everyone lived in the attractive little cabanas that clustered about the huge central hall. All ate in a vast, beautiful restaurant inside the hall itself. Robots acted as waiters.

There were libraries, lounging rooms, a vast Moorish swimming pool, and a marble dancing pavilion that was like a debutante's dream.

But there was no contact with the outside world save radio reception, and that was not general.

There were more than two hundred dwellers in the valley, including children of the married couples, Kent estimated from Dorothy's talk. Mostly they were young people, rarely more

than twenty-five years of age. Children were being permitted to grow normally until they reached their maximum growth mentally and physically, then were to be subjected to the ray treatment to arrest their growth at that point.

Where the colony had drawn its recruits, Dorothy did not say, but she did explain that only individuals were selected who showed an abounding enthusiasm for research, or for art. Otherwise so perfect an existence as Futura offered would become too monotonous to be endured.

"But I've talked enough," said the girl abruptly. "We must see Daddy. He is expecting you."

They crossed the broad plaza, and entered the huge central hall, mounting the wide stairways to the very top where Dr. Dalmetz had his office with a huge window leading out onto a balcony overlooking the plaza below.

The room was littered with deep divans, huge, comfortable chairs, radio receivers, and tables. All of the walls, except one, were inset with book-filled shelves. The single exception was the wall that held the big switchboard capable of handling the current for a large city. In this wall also was a large, ornamental Italian fireplace with a long mantel above it.

DR. DALMETZ was lounging in a chair beside the window when they entered. He got to his feet at once, making a tall, lean, bronzed figure in white shorts and sandals that matched his snowy hair. He thrust out a honky hand in a firm grip to Kent, and Kent found himself looking into ageless blue eyes that now held only the light of friendship.

"Dorothy radioed ahead that you were coming," explained Dr. Dalmetz in his deep voice. "It's a great pleasure

to see you again after all these years. You were very fortunate to get in touch with Dorothy while she was in Washington, since she was there but a short time. It was our first contact with the outside world since Futura was established eight years ago, and it will be our last.

"Dorothy would not have gone even then, but one of our young men, a brilliant chap named Grant, suffered a brain shock in a laboratory explosion a month ago, and wandered away from the valley. We were sure that he had gone back to his old home in Washington. We radioed the police there, and they located him in a cheap rooming house. Dorothy went at once, but the poor fellow was in his bed and babbling incessantly. They moved him to a hospital at once, but he died."

"He didn't even recognize us," put in the girl soberly. "He still thought he was working with the protective screen and talked about it all the time."

Dr. Dalmetz turned to Kent. "What brought you here?" he asked kindly.

"Word has gotten to the government that you have perfected a completely successful defense against both air and ground attack," Kent explained. "With the present war getting under way, the United States needs it badly."

Dalmetz shook his white head. "They aren't going to fight overseas—not this time, at least. They will threaten, as they are doing now, but they'll avoid a war."

"But millions of men have already been called to the colors," argued Kent. "Women and children are being rushed from the big cities of Europe out into the shallow caves that have been dug all over the countryside. Doctor, I'm empowered to offer you anything you ask for this invention if it works."

"I suppose," mused the elderly scientist, "the leak about the screen came

through Grant's dying words in that boarding house." Then he added whimsically. "But I have no need of money. You'll see none of it here in Futura. True, we could use some metals, but even that is no inducement."

"But surely, Doctor—" began Kent anxiously.

"I know what you are about to say Kent: surely I am not so selfish as to deny my native land the protection this screen will afford at such a time. And I'm not, Kent. If war really breaks, I shall send the plans to Washington and I won't accept a penny for them. Wait here a few days and see how the situation develops. If I'm wrong and there is actual war, I shall hand you the plans to take back.

"You see, Kent, if this device should fall into the wrong hands, it would be a hideous weapon of offense instead of defense. Without going into detail I may tell you that the device consists of projectors laid every few yards along the ground and fed by a high voltage cable. These projectors take the current and shoot it skyward to the Heavyside layer as threads of electric current, an entirely new conception of electrical transmission. Anything trying to pass through this screen is literally shredded to pieces.

"If this device should fall in the wrong hands it could become a hideous weapon of offense. They would simply tip the projectors over on their sides and raze the landscape ahead of their advancing troops, mowing down trees, houses, men, tanks, and small hills alike that stood in their path. That is why we must wait before taking action. There is too much at stake to risk losing the device right now.

"Meantime, Kent, remain here in Futura and live as we do. Learn for yourself how rich and full life may be

in the future when mankind really becomes of age mentally. Dorothy will assign you to a cabana and will get you suitable clothes from the storehouse."

KENT thanked him. There was nothing else he could do. Then he accompanied Dorothy down the wide stairs and out of the central hall. She selected a cabana for him, and instructed the robot attendant to put it in shape for occupancy.

As they started away from the cabana, she halted suddenly.

"Astronomy was always your hobby, wasn't it Kent?" she said a little wistfully. "Don't you remember the mail order telescope you and I mounted on the roof to discover the moons of Jupiter for ourselves?"

He nodded, wondering why she mentioned it.

She turned and pointed up to a peak at the head of the valley. "We are excavating up there for a new observatory. Plans for a huge 300-inch telescope are being drawn in the laboratories to be placed there. You—you could have a place on the staff if you wish," she added eagerly.

He stared up at the barren peak a long time in silence. Presently she slid her arm inside his. "Come," she said a little sadly. "There is much more to see."

But all that afternoon Kent was at war with himself, a war between the strange, new glorious desire to remain here in Futura forever, and the harsh, stern sense of lifelong duty that reminded him of the need to serve his government and the matter-of-fact every day world, instead of loitering here in this idealistic place.

And as the long afternoon drew to a close, the glorious, strange desire won the battle. Or rather Dorothy won the battle for it. She and Kent were stand-

ing close together in the dusk watching hidden lights beginning to bathe the fabulous central hall in rosy light. She was talking of the things required of those who dwelt here in Futura.

"Truth, honesty and sincerity," she was saying. "Those things above all others are required by Daddy and the others of the council—"

She broke off startled, looking up into his face now just above her. Kent scarcely heard the words. He was only aware of the nearness of her to him here in the dusk, and the perfume of her hair in his nostrils.

"Dorothy," he said huskily. "Dorothy, I love you."

CHAPTER III

"They've Lied to You!"

A FIRE with his thoughts, Kent pushed open the door of his cabana and entered. He could send word

back to Washington—have it sent back—that he'd died in an accident—

"That you, Rider?" whispered someone from the tiny closet on the opposite side of the room.

Kent froze in his tracks, the song he had been humming dead on his lips. His thoughts leaped to the pistol he'd dropped so carelessly into the dresser drawer hours ago. Probably it was gone now, but it might still be there. He made a catlike step toward the dresser, then halted abruptly as the closet door opened a crack.

"Don't get excited, Rider. It's only me—Mason, the Chief's secretary."

"Mason?" echoed Kent, staring in amazement as the door swung open and he saw the long-nosed, thin-lipped



"Welcome to Future, Kent Rider!" she said in glad tones

features of the Chief's secretary peering out furtively to make certain the cabana was empty. "What—how—"

"Sh!" warned Mason, slipping out of the closet. "Someone may hear you. I stowed away in that Dalmetz girl's plane. The Chief thought it advisable," he added glibly. "I'm to be your ace in the hole, if you need one here."

Kent thought that over a moment. It was very like the Chief to send out a second operative to back up the first, he knew.

Mason stared about the cabana again to make certain they were alone, then flung himself on the bed and got out a cigarette.

"Well, what have you learned?" he demanded.

"Nothing," replied Kent, aware of a growing dislike for the insolence in Mason's eyes, and beginning to feel vaguely troubled because of the decision he'd just made—to remain here and pretend to be dead. That was all out now. It was just Fate's way of reminding him of his duty.

"Haven't you seen Dalmetz?"

"Yes, and he admits that he has the plans for the 'screen' as he calls it, but he won't give them up to the government because he says that the crisis isn't anything but a game of bluff and nobody's going to fight."

"Nobody's going to fight?" repeated Mason angrily. "He's just a dirty liar. After those metal monsters left me alone in the hangar, I went over to your ship and tuned in the radio. Fighting's been raging along a two hundred mile front for hours. The dead are already estimated at a hundred thousand. Bombers have blasted whole cities off the map already. They say the women and children casualties will run up to half a million by morning. If that old boy let the people here listen to the radio, they'd know it, and so would you,

but he's too smart for that."

Cold beads of sweat popped out on Kent's forehead. "They've tricked me!" he said hoarsely. "They've lied to me to keep me here until it is too late, but I'll fool them! I'll get those plans somehow!"

"Sure you will!" exclaimed Mason. "You're the best operative the Bureau has. But I'm beginning to think that it was a good thing that the Chief sent me, or they might have taken the guts clear out of you. Now how about rustling me some grub? I haven't had a bite to eat since yesterday."

"Leave it to me," said Kent, grimly.

KENT'S thoughts were black and stormy when he went to meet Dorothy for dinner. She was behind all this, he told himself savagely again and again. She'd tricked him into coming here—had deliberately tricked him into making love to her so that they could hold him here. Pacifists, that's what these dwellers in Futura were—or something a lot worse. And the more he thought about it, the more hateful the place became and the more hateful Dorothy Dalmetz grew.

She came running to meet him as he strode into the vast dining hall, but drew back in dismay from the sight of his flashing eyes and grim face.

"Why, Kent, what's the matter?" she asked breathlessly.

"Nothing—nothing at all," he replied curtly.

She drew back as though he had slapped her, and swift tears filled her eyes, eyes that regarded him with tragic perplexity. He fought down a sudden wild desire to take her in his arms. She forced a trembling smile.

"Shall we eat, Kent?"

He nodded. The food was tasteless but they kept up the pretense of eating, without talking, and all the while Doro-

thy's face grew more and more tragic. Finally Kent felt that he could stand the sight of her no longer and stood up.

"I'll—I'll meet you at the dance pavilion in an hour," he said politely.

She could only nod, and fairly ran from the room.

He must still pretend to be nice to her, he warned himself savagely. She was the one avenue left open to him to get those precious plans. Somehow he'd have to figure out how to get her to tell him where they were hidden. It would be fair—all was fair in war.

He beckoned a robot waiter and got a tray of food, announcing that it was a midnight lunch for himself, and carried it back to his cabana.

It was dark now, and the hidden lights were rosily coloring the vast fairylike central hall and the clustering cabanas like a dream city, but the beauty of it was lost on Kent as he strode blackly along.

But Mason was not in the cabana when Kent arrived with the tray. Angry and annoyed, Kent put the tray on the table and took a seat by the window to wait. What possessed Mason to leave the cabana, anyway? It must be that someone came nosing around and he had sneaked out to prevent discovery.

Kent stared out of the window, trying to thrust the vision of Dorothy's tear-filled, hurt eyes from his mind. Abruptly he sat up, staring incredulously at the high balcony of Dr. Dalmetz's office at the top of the central hall.

A man leaped frantically out of the big window of the office, plunged across the balcony and swarmed over the balustrade. His clawing fingers hooked themselves in the thick vine growing there, and he went swarming down it toward the plaza fifty feet below. Kent's eyes widened, for the man was

Mason. There was no mistaking him.

Before Mason could reach the ground, Dr. Dalmetz came running out onto the balcony and leaned over the balustrade.

"Stop!" he thundered down at Mason. "Stop where you are!"

Mason promptly let go all holds, fell the remaining twelve feet to the ground, recovered like a cat and went darting past the fountain toward the tarmac. Beyond the tarmac lay the lake, and beyond that the bottom of the valley and the rough country over which the planes had flown that morning to enter the valley.

"Stop!" thundered Dr. Dalmetz from his high balcony. "Stop, before it is too late!"

But Mason only plunged ahead faster, his pounding feet carrying him across the velvety turf toward the darkened lake. Terror seemed to goad him on. Kent raced out in pursuit, wondering vaguely what would happen if Mason didn't stop.

Then he had his answer. All the lights in Futura dimmed suddenly, as though the power feeding them was abruptly weakened. Hard on this came a terrific flash of lightning from the highest turret on the Central hall, a jagged, eye-searing thunderbolt that leaped down across the plaza after the fleeing figure of Mason who was now well toward the lower end of the close-cropped tarmac. It lighted up the central hall, the palms, the cabanas and the towering mountainside with a ghastly blue flare. Aghast, Kent halted in the darkness.

The bolt seemed to strike the ground at Mason's feet. He was tossed into the air and flung over and over like a limp rag doll.

Instantly a terrific clap of thunder smashed back and forth between the high walls of the valley, and rolled away

down past the lake to be lost in the rough land beyond. The lights of Futura glowed normally again. The spot where Mason had fallen receded again into the dusk of darkness beyond the washing glow of the lights.

CRIES and shouting hurst from the cabanas, and excited people poured out into the plaza to mill about shouting and questioning, some of them yelling up at Dr. Dalmetz to ask what had happened. But the old scientist did not answer. Presently he turned and went back into his office. It seemed to Kent, watching him, that the old man's shoulders were bent with weary sadness. Half a dozen men sprinted down across the tarmac toward the spot where Mason had been struck down.

Kent returned slowly to his cabana. He felt cold and tight inside, and horribly shaken.

He washed and shaved carefully and went to the dancing pavilion to meet Dorothy.

She was sitting, pathetically silent. Her very silence put Kent at a loss how to proceed toward learning the whereabouts of the plans. He decided that he'd say nothing about it tonight. The fate of Mason might bring suspicion down upon himself if he tried to bring up the subject. As far as he knew, he was regarded as a trusted visitor here in Futura, and he must do nothing to reveal the change in him.

But he was worried because there was no talk about Mason. Presently he could stand it no longer, and said to Dorothy as they were dancing.

"What was that disturbance, that strange lightning flash tonight?"

She looked away. "Someone—not one of our own people, I hope—made a mistake," she replied sadly.

"But that flash," persisted Kent. "Was it aimed at someone?"

"No, it works automatically. When something tries to cross the forbidden area beyond the tarmac, it sets off the lightning bolt which strikes it. All of us here in Futura know about it. That's why we think it must have been some outsider who got in the valley somehow unknown to us. When the searchers find the body, we will know the truth."

It was obviously very dangerous to try to get information about the plans from anyone now, Kent decided grimly. Then suddenly he saw a way to manage it, and manage it safely. Or thought he did.

CHAPTER IV

Kent Bluffs

IT was well after midnight when Kent left Dorothy at the door of her cabana. She waited expectantly, but he gave her only the briefest of goodnights and left for his own tiny dwelling.

He was eager to get at his plan which was simple enough. He'd go down to the hillside hangar where his plane was, slip into it and tune in the radio there. Then, armed with the latest reports of the fighting he'd go to Dr. Dalmetz and demand that the scientist make good his promise of handing over the plans for the protective screen to Kent. But first he'd stop at his cabana to get his pistol, if it was still there. Even a robot couldn't stand up to a steel-jacketed slug in its brain box.

He pushed open the door of the little dwelling and stepped inside. A faint groan halted him breathless in his tracks. Another groan sounded. Automatically Kent's fingers found the switch at his side and snapped on the light.

He stared at the man on the floor, swallowed involuntarily, and stared again. Mason's legs were burned off

just above the ankle. His legs were scorched to a crisp clear to the torso.

Kent made a long stride and dropped down beside the injured man. He saw then that Mason was dying fast. How he'd gotten the strength to drag himself back here to the cabana was a mystery. Kent got the little whiskey flask from his bag and poured a few drops between the parted lips.

"It's Rider, Mason—Kent Rider," he said to the dying man.

"—on mantel in office," mumbled Mason deliriously. "Found switch—he walked in on me—on mantel—old fool nearly caught—nearly had it—on mantel—found switch—"

The words died away. Kent fingered the limp wrist and let it drop. He got to his feet, lifted the lifeless, scorched body in his arms, and carried it out the back door and laid it under a palm tree a few yards away.

RETURNING to the cabana, he got the heavy pistol from the drawer. Mason's words had altered his plans now. He'd get the plans first, then go to the hangar and force the robots to get the plane out for him—No, he couldn't risk that. The plane would have to cross the forbidden area. He'd have to find another way to leave, but first he'd get the plans. And he'd have to hurry before the searchers, if they were still on the job, trailed Mason here to the cabana.

Snapping off the light, he eased out of the door and closed it behind him. The rosy glow of the sleeping city was fading gradually, and most of the cabanas were already dark. Soon the lights would die out almost completely, and only the weak light from the overhead stars would sift down into the valley.

Kent hurried cautiously to the big central hall, the hand in his pocket grip-

ping the comforting, solid butt of the heavy pistol. Any instant he expected to find robot guards barring his way, but there were none. He entered the building and mounted the broad stairways to the office.

He was startled and alarmed to find that the door wasn't locked. Easing it open a crack, he peered in. The big room was deserted, and lighted only by the dim glow of night lights on the big switchboard. He recalled Dorothy's words earlier in the day, that the switchboard worked automatically at night.

Cautiously he slipped into the office and looked around for the mantel above the big ornamental Italian fireplace. He saw it, and horrible disappointment engulfed him. The mantel was empty save for a small marble statue on either end. He might have guessed. Dr. Dalmetz had removed the plans after Mason escaped down the vine to the plaza.

Then Kent found himself staring at the draft control of the fireplace below the mantel. A draft control when there never had been nor would be a blaze in the fireplace? The control must be the switch Mason had mumbled about.

Kent crossed the room to the fireplace and turned the control lever curiously.

He found himself gaping at a small, leather brief case wired shut and sealed with lead that had magically appeared on the mantel. Kent blinked, and looked again. The brief case was still there. He reached up for it.

An invisible obstruction prevented his fingers from reaching the case. He exploded the obstruction. It felt like glass and had corners like a box. Puzzled, he pushed the switch still farther.

The brief case instantly vanished, and he found himself looking at a glass case which was empty and bolted down to the mantel with thumb screw. He

pushed the switch all the way down.

The brief case re-appeared, safely protected inside the glass box.

As Kent swiftly loosened the thumb screws he recalled that this seeming magic was the invention of a European who in 1934 or '35 had announced to the world that he had perfected mechanical invisibility through timing of light vibrations, somehow, to trick the human eye. Rotogravure sections of Sunday papers carried photographs of objects rendered partially invisible.

Lifting off the glass case, Kent thrust the brief case inside the waistband of his trousers under his coat, replaced the box, and turned back the switch. Instantly the mantel piece was again empty save for the statues on either end.

NOW as he turned to the door, he paused, heart hammering, to listen. Only the brittle whisper of the faint night hreeze through the palms about the plaza below disturbed the unearthly stillness. Swiftly he slipped out through the door, down the broad widening stairway.

It seemed terribly still now, almost as though the world was holding its breath and waiting for something to happen. Kent's thoughts flashed back to the strange terrible lightning flash, and he wondered what hidden, fearful device might even now be set to destroy him.

Sweating and peering anxiously at the darkened shadows on either hand, Kent crept out of the big building and began to skirt the edge of the plaza where the inky shadows of the motionless palms lent him their added protection.

He was passing the lighted fountain now, with its musical murmur of falling water. Soon he would reach the edge of the tarmac, but he'd never make Mason's mistake of trying to cross it

and that hellish band of destruction on the lower side. Instead he'd turn aside and climb the steep mountain slope at the right to the safety of the peaks—he froze, trying to still the thumping of his heart to listen better.

Nearby a girl was sobbing softly. Kent touched the brief case hidden under his coat and turned slowly.

Less than a dozen feet away, watching him from the dim glow of the lights of the fountain, stood Dr. Dalmetz, tall and rigid, while his right arm encircled Dorothy's shoulders. Her head was bowed and her hands covered her face to help stifle the sobs that shook her slender body. Dr. Dalmetz's face was very set, and somehow weary and sad. A huge motionless robot flanked them on either side.

"Aren't you making a mistake, Kent?" asked Dr. Dalmetz sadly.

They knew what he'd done—they knew that he'd stolen the plans! Somehow through the mechanical magic of this unbelievable place, they had learned of his theft of the brief case. But what of it? He was in the right. No man with an ounce of red blood in his veins wouldn't have done the same thing, now that war was actually under way. The man who wouldn't steal such a thing to protect women and children from hideous bombings should never be allowed to consort with honest folks again. He was proud of what he had done, Kent told himself fiercely. A little old fashioned bluff would have to go here.

"Mistake?" He flung the word harshly at the white-haired scientist. "You've made the mistake in trying to fool me, in telling me that there is no war. Just a peaceful little game of bluff, you called it."

"Kent," said Dr. Dalmetz quietly. "Haven't you something that doesn't belong to you?"

Kent went cold and tight at the words. His glance darted desperately to the motionless robots, and the hand in his coat pocket gripped the gun butt fiercely.

"No!" he lied. Then he added savagely, "Why did you lie to me about that actual fighting?"

"I didn't lie to you Kent, and I wouldn't," replied the elderly scientist gently. "You don't trust me, nor trust any of us here in Futura, do you Kent?"

"Why should I? You've given me little enough cause to!"

Dorothy broke suddenly away from her father's protective arm.

"Oh, Daddy, I can't stand any more!" she sobbed, and fled across the empty plaza.

KENT stared after her tragically, engraving on his memory forever the sight of her slender white figure running away from him—running out of his life. For a blind instant he wanted to hurt out the truth—all of it—to Dalmetz, to tell him how Mason had listened to the radio reports on the Army plane and had caught the bulletins telling of the bombing of cities of the hating armies. Kent wanted to cry out that Mason had died in line of duty trying to get those precious plans that would protect the helpless women and children of America from such a fate; he wanted to tell Dalmetz that he himself was bound to get the plans by almost any means, even though above all else he wanted to remain here with Dorothy, to become one of the dwellers in Futura, instead of following the inexorable line of duty and take the plans back to Washington.

But with the words trembling on his lips, Kent rallied fiercely and flung the thought from him.

"I'm walking out of here," he said grimly. "But I'm not going to make the

mistake that another man made tonight and try to cross the forbidden area down there below the tarmac. I'll find another way."

"There is no other way," said Dr. Dalmetz with a sigh. "The hand extends all round Futura."

Kent's laugh was bitter. "It's a swell prison you've made for your so-called advanced civilization."

"Everyone knows where the switch that controls the hand is," explained the scientist gently. "Anyone who wishes can shut off the power and walk out unharmed. The safety band was never intended to keep people inside Futura, but only to keep out mountain lions, and other beasts who prowl about at night and might come here. But do not walk out, Kent. I'll throw off the switch myself while you fly your plane out. The robots will help you get it out of the hangar. I'm sorry it worked out this way. Dorothy—myself, hoped with all our hearts that you would have become one of us here in the valley. Goodby, Kent, and good luck—always."

He turned his back on Kent and trudged away across the plaza. Kent stared after him a long moment, then recklessly shrugged his shoulders and followed the two robots to the hangar.

As the powerful army ship roared off the ground under the mighty surge of its motor, Kent twisted his head for a backward look. The rosy glow of Futura was nearly gone now, with only the fountain making a small luminous spot in the center of the plaza. The thought came to him like a blow that he would never see it again. Then he jerked his head round forward again. This was duty, he reminded himself savagely. But after all, he could take one more look. Again he twisted his head over his shoulder.

But there was no sign of Futura. He

blinked and stared hard. It had vanished completely in the brief second he'd turned his face forward. Now he could see only the black hulking ridge of the Devils Hinge range cutting off the horizon stars. It was mechanical invisibility, of course, probably the same method used to hide the brief case on the mantel. That was why pilots of airplanes chancing near would never see Futura.

With a horrible, growing sense of loss, Kent tried to tune in the radio and found it out of commission.

CHAPTER V

"Escaped. Presumably Dead"

WASHINGTON in the gray mist of the early morning saw Kent Rider's pursuit ship drop swiftly out of the sky for a landing at the airport. Kent was vaguely surprised at the lack of military activity, but lost no time in getting a taxicab and heading for the Chief's office. He found the Chief there as usual, for it was the Chief's habit to be at his desk early, and pushed his way in to see him.

"What's the latest war news?" burst out Kent. "My radio wouldn't work. I'd like to transfer at once to the aviation branch—overseas service as soon as possible—"

"What are you talking about?" interrupted the Chief, eyeing him sharply. "There's no war. If you'd read a paper yesterday or listened to the radio, you'd know that peace has come."

The Chief broke off staring at Kent Rider's face which had paled to a deathly gray.

"Damn Mason!" choked Kent. "He lied! He said they were fighting—"

"Wait!" The Chief's words were as cold and sharp as a knife. "Are you by

any chance referring to my former secretary? The mystery is beginning to clear up a bit around here. You must be in that spy ring, too. Mason was the head of it. We thought he had gotten that information about the Dalmetz protective screen from that fellow Grant we found dying in the rooming house, but now it's pretty apparent that he could have gotten it from you. And where is Mason?"

Kent Rider's world was falling to pieces fast. "Why—I—Mason is dead! But you surely don't think that I—but I brought you the plans for the screen. Take them, and take my resignation with them!"

He flung the wire-bound, lead-sealed little brief case on the desk.

The Chief picked it up. The noise of the breaking wires sounded like pistol shots in the utter stillness of the room. The Chief drew out a thick sheaf of papers. He stared hard at it. Kent's jaw dropped in stunned amazement. The top sheet of paper was blank. The Chief rifled through the others. They were blank, too.

Kent suddenly threw back his head and laughed, a wild, high eerie sound. "Fool that I was!" he shouted, his voice cracking. "I should've guessed. After Mason failed, Dalmetz replaced the real plans with this! 'Haven't you got something that doesn't belong to you Kent?' 'Oh, no, Doctor, I haven't got the plans.' And all the time I was telling the truth and didn't know it. Oh it's funny, funny! Hah, ha!"

The Chief spoke aside to one of the men who had come in silently, attracted by Kent Rider's shrill words.

"Get Dr. Jones, and have him bring a straight jacket. After all, this is the best way out for him. A sanitarium is better than a prison, and this will white-wash his record, poor devil."

They took Kent Rider away still

screaming and laughing, but he was sane enough in that he went quite willingly, and asked to be spared the straight jacket. Three hours later the hospital staff reported him missing. The search for him lasted six months before it was finally abandoned, and the words, "Escaped. Presumably dead," closed the record of Kent Rider.

TWO old prospectors halted their burro to stare at the lean, shambling man with a pack on his back and a stick in his hand who was heading back from the savage, barren jumble of the Devil's Hinge foothills.

"There's that feller again," said one of the oldsters, shading his eyes with a gnarled brown hand. "We seen him six months ago over by Injun Springs. Remember? He don't look like no gold hunter to me. Wonder what he's after?"

The other man tapped his forehead significantly. "He's lookin' for a lost city in the Devil's Hinge. I palavered a bit with him at the Springs that day. He asked me if I'd ever run across such a place. Says you can't see it. Just imagine that! But he's harmless. I reckon now he's headin' for Broken Point, hopin' to find water."

Kent Rider, unaware of the lively, curious stares of the two old men in the near distance, plodded tiredly over the ridge out of their sight, down the rough slope toward the ghost town of Broken Point. But he'd never been more sane in his life, even though it was all so hopeless. He'd lost track of time now. There might not even be any water in Broken Point, so long dead and empty like his own hopes. Just a place of memories. But with water he could keep on. . . .

KENT stared a long time at the girl standing in the gaping doorway of

the dilapidated Palace Bar on Broken Point's single street. She stood so rigidly, staring back at him. A young girl she was, maybe seventeen or eighteen—oh, it was impossible! There was no girl, no human being at all in this dusty tomb of golden hopes. His thoughts were playing tricks on him again. Yet—

"Kent!" screamed the girl suddenly, and came plunging down the dusty street toward him. "Kent Rider!"

Then she was sobbing against his tattered shirt and clinging to him frantically.

"Dorothy!" he said huskily in her hair. "I stole that brief case from the office. Mason, the man who was killed, lied to me. I thought that I was doing right—"

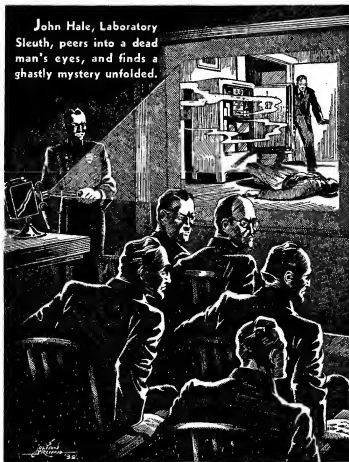
"Hush!" Her fingers sealed his lips. "I know the truth, too. I hung over the radio hour after hour. Then the news dispatches came through telling what they had done to you in Washington. Daddy and I were hurrying to go and help you, when word came through that you had escaped, and we knew that we were too late. But I knew that you would try to get back to us. Oh, I just knew you would! So I loaded supplies into the plane and flew it here myself. The plane is pegged down right behind the Palace Bar there. I knew that you could never find Futura by yourself, and that some day you were bound to come bere to Broken Point in your search. So I've been waiting. It was so long, but I knew that you'd come."

"Are you sure that you can find Futura again?"

"Of course I can. I'll just radio Daddy, and he'll lift the blanket of invisibility and we'll fly right in. And, Kent, they've poured the new 300-inch lens. I made them save a place for you on the staff. And just wait till you see the new cabana I had them build—for us! . . ."

John Hale *CONVICTS*

John Hale, Laboratory Sleuth, peers into a dead man's eyes, and finds a ghastly mystery unfolded.



A bombshell of surprise was the scene that flashed on the screen

A KILLER

By
ED EARL REPP

CHAPTER I


Wanted . . . The Laboratory Sleuth

THERE were two in the room, undisturbed by reeking gas. One was Senator Ryder Strickland. The other, his prize Smoky Persian cat. Both were dead, the feline lying in a grotesque shape beside a saucer of spilled milk, the anemic form of the Senator propped weirdly against the open refrigerator from which still

drifted the pale, string-like tendrils of ammonia fumes.

Stinging fumes lay heavy in the room, burning the lungs and blurring the puzzled eyes of Detective-Lieutenant Charlie Griffin and his superior, Chief Maxwell. Weariness etched minute lines on their blocky faces and Maxwell's full lips were almost savage as he leaned against the kitchen range. There were little patches beneath the eyes of Griffin, telling of loss of sleep and now, red-rimmed from the ammonia gas, they were heavy-lidded. But Charlie Griffin was very much awake to the seemingly unsolvable puzzle confronting them.

Griffin grimly ran his thick fingers through his dark hair and dabbed at his inflamed eyes with wrinkled



"It's a frame-up!" shouted Longley, leaping to his feet. "This is your idea, Bryce! You did it . . . you hated him!"

knuckles. His jaw was clamped hard as he kept looking at the dead cat. Absently he speculated on the havoc a .45 calibre bullet could make of such a beautiful animal. He sighed from time to time like a man who is up against a blank wall and knows it. And Griffin, as well as his chief, was stumped.

"Wish Doc Hale was here," he murmured, thinking aloud.

"What's that?" Chief of Detectives Maxwell swung his tall, gaunt form on the officer. Beneath grizzled brows that were like tangled tooth-brush bristles, a pair of shrewd, streaming eyes deviled Griffin.

"I said—there ain't much to go on, is there?" the big detective faltered. "Just four slugs from a forty-five automatic like ten thousand guys own. Two in the Senator, one in his cat, and one through the pipes of the ice box. Nothin' else."

"Griffin, you're a darned poor liar," Maxwell scathed, sarcasm creasing deep lines about his mouth. "You said you wished Hale was here. Well, I don't. John Hale, the Laboratory Sleuth—huh! Once before that test tube cop made fools of us when you took it upon yourself to ask his help."

Griffin stirred under the weight of his superior's ridicule. "Didn't exactly make fools of us," he defended. "He admitted to the papers that without a lot of laboratory stuff nobody could have figured out those jewel thefts."

"But that didn't make the department—and me—look any smarter," Maxwell harked. "This time the whole country is watching Los Angeles to see what happens. G-men are due here right now. One of the biggest men in the Senate shot to death last night, just twelve hours after he arrived here for a visit! This will make the Chief of Detectives a sort of fair-haired boy if he doesn't find out who and why darned

quick, won't it, Griffin?"

His voice kept rising until the burly detective seemed to shrink inside his baggy blue serge suit. Griffin mopped his forehead. "I've only been on the job six hours, Chief," he put in. "I ain't thinking of asking Hale's help—not yet, anyway. At least I know how the murder was done, if not why."

He slipped down from the sink and gestured at the door behind Maxwell. "I figure the killer got in without the Senator hearing him. Strickland was just puttin' the bottle of milk away after feeding his cat. That's when the guy poured a couple of shots into his back. Then the killer—God knows why—put a shot in kitty. If that cat was only alive, and could talk!"

THE eyes of both men sought the pathetic huddle of gray fur and blood. Something like awe spread over Griffin's beefy countenance. To break the spell, he glanced away. "That ain't all, either," he said. "I've got those suspects we interviewed right in the other room."

"Suspects!" The word dropped like a hall of lead from the Chief's lips. Griffin almost expected to hear it strike the floor. "A suspect, Lieutenant, is someone who might conceivably have committed a crime. First you thought it was Ward Longley, Strickland's cousin, because he was left the entire fortune. But at ten-forty-five, after seeing Strickland, Longley was pinched for speeding in Pasadena. And the Coroner tells us the Senator died at one o'clock this morning!"

"Then you decided it was Mort Hanley, the boy friend of Brenda Martin, the Senator's secretary. Hanley happens to be an ex-con, and the Martin girl admits she was fired last night because she wouldn't give him up when Strickland learned of his record. So

Hanley did it in a fit of anger—only he didn't, because he and the girl left the hotel at ten o'clock and no one saw them come back."

Slowly Maxwell stabbed his thumb at the closed door behind him. "Now, you think it was Walter Bryce, because he's vice-president of Northwestern Lumber Industries, Incorporated, and had dinner with Strickland. He's known for his high-pressure lobbying, and the late Senator Strickland was noted for hating his insides. Maybe they had a fight! Only Brenda Martin says he left just before she did, and everything was peaceful, not unpleasant. Think again, Mastermind."

Griffin scowled at him in open rebellion. "They're the logical ones, Chief, and you can't get away from that," he banded back. "There's nobody else."

Maxwell came close to him and planted his fists on his hips, towering above his tall underling by virtue of a well-seasoned, six-feet-two frame. "There is someone else!" he thundered. "The murderer! And you're going to find him, mister, or you're going to fill a flatfoot's beat out in Sawtelle. My reputation and my job depend on the type of men I pick. You'll either break this case or you'll show me you aren't the kind of man I need!"

For a moment his harsh tones lost their edge. "You're a smart enough dick, Griffin, but you've got to produce to hold up that big badge you wear. This is the most dangerous case politically I've ever handled, and I want it cracked! What I said about a beat in the sticks isn't just talk. Think it over, Griffin."

He turned and stalked to the door. Halfway out, he glanced back, a new gleam in his eyes. "And don't think you can get out of my department by throwing the case and landing out in Sawtelle, either," he flung back. "Be-

cause if you let me down I'll be out there right behind you . . . warming a desk sergeant's chair!"

Griffin grinned. The grin died the moment the door slammed. He knew the spot he and the whole department were in. He didn't blame Maxwell for blowing off. He was like that—sarcastic, sour-faced, threatening, when a case started. But if the detective on the job fell down miserably, he would never hear a word of blame from the old department head.

That made him all the more determined to find somewhere to start. And as it always did when trouble reared, his mind crept back to Doctor John Hale, the encyclopedia of information whom reporters had nicknamed the "Laboratory Sleuth."

Every time his eyes strayed to the dead Persian cat, he told himself Hale would know the answer. So after a while he went out, dismissed the three suspects with a warning not to try to leave the city, and sought the exclusive "Miracle Mile" district of Wilshire Boulevard, where the scientist had his laboratory and apartments.

HALE himself admitted the detective to his apartment. He led him into the well-lighted, high-ceilinged laboratory.

"So the strange case of Senator Strickland has you on the ropes," he smiled. "Well, have a seat, Charlie. Let's talk about it."

His method of "talking about it" was to perch on a high stool and go on squinting through a microscope, while his long, white fingers were busy poking with instruments at something that lay on the table.

Frowning, Griffin sat and watched him for a moment. Always he was amazed and a little awed by the jungle of chromium and glass and rubber tuh-

ing through which the scientist prowled; but the strangest and most wonderful thing in it, he thought, was the doctor himself.

Originally an independent laboratory analyst, Dr. John Hale had attracted widespread attention by his brilliance. Soon he was taking only cases upon which all others had failed. A manufacturer of airplanes needed an alloy as hard as steel and as light as aluminum; Hale found it for him. A famous moving picture producer found himself "haunted" by a living, speaking ghost; it was Hale who earned his customary five thousand dollar fee by dissolving the ghost into solid carbon dioxide and photons frozen to Absolute Zero.*

Griffin started talking at last. . . .

"If I could just figure out why that blessed cat was killed!" he finished his story. "There it sat, lapping milk while the killer drew a bead on Strickland's rear collar button. Maybe it scared him to think the cat had seen the crime and might give a sign somehow. I remember us kids used to think the last thing a cat saw when it died would stay in its eyes like a picture.** Crazy idea."

* "The Scientific Ghost," in the January, 1939, issue of *AMAZING STORIES*.

** It is true that the eyes of sheep and cattle have been used by photographers as the lens of a camera, and actual photographs have been taken in this manner. But as a matter of fact, the retina is sensitive to light, but not to the retention of any image it receives. The function of the retina is to catch the image, impress it on the series of nerve ends which conduct the impression to the brain, where analysis and interpretation is completed. However, if the retina itself were to be coated with a sensitized element, and all organic matter removed, it would actually be a film, and would retain an image. But it would also be necessary to "fix" that image and avert "over-exposure" and ruining of the image by some method. Ammonia is considered here to be the element used as a "catalyst" to transform the organic matter of the retina to an emulsion, capable of retaining the image sent to it by the lens of the cat's eye, and also as the agent which fixes that image and prevents further action by light on the retina emulsion.—Ed.

Griffin glanced up. He started as he realized the full force of John Hale's owlish eyes was burning into his countenance.

"Sometimes it pays to be a little crazy, Charlie," he said cryptically. "Come over here. I want to show you something."

PUZZLED, the big officer picked his way through the maze, following Hale into a room hardly larger than a closet. Hale shut the door and turned out the light in the windowless room. Then a square beam of brilliance drove through the blackness to sprawl a rectangle on the white wall.

John Hale slipped a slide into the back of the projector. Against the wall was delineated a blurry photograph. "What's it look like to you?" he asked.

Griffin turned a befuddled look on the scientist. "Why—it's you, ain't it, doc?" he countered. "Pretty poor photo, if I do say so, but I can recognize it, especially the way you squint when you're thinkin'."

Hale smashed his palms together. Then he snapped the overhead light on and stood grinning triumphantly at the officer. "You've just been looking at a crazy little notion of my own," he announced. "The picture you saw was projected—not from ordinary film—but through the retina of a frog's eye! That frog died under a painless gas, while it watched me administer the stuff!"

Charlie Griffin was stupidly silent while the words filtered through his brain. Without warning he lurched to his feet. "Doc!" he gasped. "You—you feeling okay?"

"After your unconscious praise of my work," Hale beamed through the thick lenses of his glasses, "I can truthfully say I never felt better. Look here—" Springing through the door into the lab, he took up a beaker of semi-transpar-

ent liquid. With a glass rod he stirred a dozen tiny round, greenish glohules.

"Frog's eyes," he said. "These are being 'developed,' you might say. I wash them in three baths of my own fixing solutions—nothing like hypo, I might add. These liquids of mine act on the organic tissue within the retina of the eye. After the tiny chemical deposits are fixed, I peel off the retina. You may or may not know that when we see a thing, substances in the retina change to the light rays touching them. Freezing them just as they were when the frog died, I retain the light and dark spots so similar to the negative of a strip of photographic film."

Suddenly Charlie seized the tall scientist by his hony shoulders. "Doc!" he roared. "Why can't you do it to that cat's eyes? The last thing he saw was the killer shootin' him!" His face was lighted up as if with the season's first sunburn.

Hale shook his head. "It's quite impossible," he said. "Before the experiment will work at all, the subject has to be made to inhale one of several gases. The best one I've found so far is ammonia."

CHAPTER II

The Face of a Killer

CHARLIE'S little blue eyes disappeared momentarily in a slow blink. Then he was dancing about the scientist, shaking him like a rag doll. "You're water to my thirst, doc!" he shouted. "The murder room was full of ammonia when the cat was killed! The killer missed Strickland with one shot and broke the works of the refrigerator. That ammonia must've poured out like water from a broken main!"

Even the undemonstrative laboratory sleuth could not keep the exultant

stridor out of his voice. "Bring me the cat, then!" he snapped. "While you're at it, try to arrange the coroner's jury for tonight. We'll be ready by then—if we're going to be ready at all."

"Can do!" Charlie Griffin agreed. Then he was gone, with only a stir of air to indicate his passage.

It was a tense atmosphere that charged the room when Hale deftly removed the dead cat's eyes an hour later. Doctor Hale's eyebrows arched high as he turned them between rubber-gloved fingers. "Excellent!" he said. "The retinas are absolutely perfect. We should get almost perfect pictures."

The eyes dropped into the first developing solution with twin "plunks." Ten minutes later, Hale was raising them with tweezers, rinsing them, and plunging them into the second bath. While he waited, the scientist stood in a characteristic attitude, with his arms crossed and the fingers of his right hand tugging at the lobe of his ear. Griffin paced through the laboratory with his hands shoved deep in his pockets.

Finally the green spheroids emerged from the final, fixing solution. Eagerly, then, Hale set his scalpel to slicing away the delicate retinas. His eyes looked huge as they goggled through magnifying spectacles at the finished membranes. Both revealed tiny light and dark patches.

With acetone, he fixed one of them to a glass slide. In a few long strides he reached the dark room. The door slammed shut, the overheads went out, the projector flared through the darkness.

Then the slide slipped into place. Across the room, as if by magic, appeared the form of a tall, dark-haired young man across whose visage was drawn a look of horror. Griffin uttered a bellow.

"It's him!" his voice came. "Ward

Longley—the cousin who inherited the hundred and fifty grand!”

Then for a moment there was silence, as both men stared at the unbelievable proof of Longley's guilt. Longley stood in the kitchen doorway, leaning against the jamb so that his right arm and hand were obscured from view. His eyes were wide and white rimmed, fixed at a point to the left of where the cat must have lain, watching and dying.

“Shut it off, doc,” Griffin ground out. “I’ve seen enough. Let’s lug this outfit down to the Hall of Justice for tonight’s session.”

HALE had his first look at the suspects as they sat across the small coroner's jury room that night. With a portable projector and his precious slide, he occupied a seat at the back. A few reporters and he were the only outsiders.

Ward Longley caught his eye immediately, unmistakable by his sharp resemblance to the photograph. He was the most nervous of the three men against the wall, continually halling a handkerchief between his hands. Dark circles shaded his eyes.

Mort Hanley was the coolest of them. A short, thickset man in his late twenties, he leaned back in his chair, winking now and then at a girl who sat just behind the rail, near the laboratory sleuth. His freshly-shaved jowls were blue, his brows a black bar.

More angry than nervous, Walter Bryce glared at the twelve members of the coroner's jury and kept rapping the tips of his fingers against the chair arm. The Northwestern Lumber man had a massive frame that hinted that he had begun at the bottom of his trade. His jaw was like that of a bulldog, his mouth hard and unyielding, his hair prematurely white.

Now the coroner's voice from the

bench drew all eyes. “Gentlemen of the jury,” he intoned, “you will listen to the facts in the death of Ryder Strickland and decide whether he met his death accidentally or was murdered or a suicide; and if murdered, then it is your duty to decide what person or persons shall be held to stand trial for his death.”

Testimony began, various hotel officials giving their stories concerning the time the three men against the wall left the apartments. Brenda Martin, a hard-faced little brunette, swaggered to the witness stand and told of Strickland's firing her because she refused to give up Mort Hanley at his demand. Hanley grinned at her.

Hanley's attitude was much changed when he himself was escorted to the stand. A ballistics expert had determined that the bullets by which the Senator and his cat died were fired from a .45 automatic pistol. For the first time, tension whipped through the courtroom when the deputy district attorney, Gans, produced evidence showing the ex-convict had bought such a gun just three weeks before!

Hanley could offer no explanation for the purchase, nor did he help his predicament by admitting that he had lost it. He was red-faced and breathless when the lawyer finished with him.

Charlie Griffin was visibly excited when he lowered himself into the chair beside the coroner's bench.

“As the detective in charge of this case,” Coroner Wills asked him, “what information do you have concerning the death of Ryder Strickland?”

“Plenty!” Griffin burst. “Most of the routine facts have already been brought out. But thanks to my friend, Dr. John Hale—”

The thud of heels on the corridor floor, outside, stopped him. The door swung in, to admit . . . Chief of De-

tectives Maxwell. Griffin flushed to the roots of his hair. Grinning feebly, he watched the gaunt old law officer take a seat.

"I—I guess I'll let the doc tell it himself," he finished lamely. He slunk back to his chair, exposing the redness of his ears and neck to Maxwell's dour scrutiny.

HALE unhurriedly took the stand. "Most of you will laugh at what I am about to say," he began tersely. "Probably none of you will understand it, but before you leave this room you will have plenty to think about. To begin, it was only the sheerest good fortune that I was able to help in the matter. I have been working for over a year on a discovery of mine that the retina of a frog's eye retains something like a photographic impression upon its death, provided certain conditions are fulfilled."

He went on, telling in simple scientific language how the miracle had been performed.

Coroner Wills stirred impatiently. "Confine yourself to the facts, Doctor," he growled. "The jury room is hardly the place for scientific speculation."

"Hardly speculation," Hale said calmly. "I'm dealing strictly with facts. You see, the Persian cat Senator Strickland owned died under exactly the same conditions as these frogs I have described. It was easy to 'develop' its eyes and secure a picture—of the murderer!"

There was complete, blinking silence; then someone in the jury box chuckled. It was the signal for a storm of raucous laughter to rain about the laboratory sleuth. He colored, the usual placid gleam of his owlish eyes freezing into a granite-like glitter. His brows darkened.

In the back of the room Chief Max-

well stood up. "Griffin, you damn fool!" he roared. "I warned you—"

Hale's tones knifed like a saber through the cacophony. "Quiet, for one minute!" he barked. "The murderer is one of the three men sitting before you now. I'm prepared to prove that statement!"

Without waiting for their consent, he set about placing the projector on a table and training it on a section of the wall. By the time he and Charlie Griffin had darkened the room and thrown a beam of light against the plaster, it was silent as a tomb.

Something like a bombshell exploded when the image of Ward Longley sprawled over the wall. A commotion arose. Griffin flooded the room with light and caught the young heir to the Strickland fortune in the act of springing from his chair.

He clamped a big hand on his arm. Longley's features twisted with hate. "It's a damned frame-up!" he shouted. "Bryce, this is your idea. You're the one my cousin hated. You did it!"

Shaking and biting his lip, he finally got a grip on himself. "This is ridiculous," he bit out. "I was arrested for speeding in Pasadena at ten-forty-five and jailed until morning. The murder occurred at one in the morning, according to the Coroner."

Hale turned a slow glance on Coroner Wills' scowling countenance. "But the Coroner forgot this one thing—" he smiled icily. "When the killer shot Strickland, he broke the ammonia pipes in the refrigerator. The sudden release of all that compressed gas would have partially frozen the body within a matter of minutes! It is my contention that that would have made the murder impossible to time accurately. More than likely, Strickland died about nine in the evening!"

A growing murmur arose among the

reporters. The Coroner squirmed miserably. But he was broad-minded enough to admit his error.

"Possibly you are right, Doctor," he murmured. "But you can't ask us to indict a man on such evidence as this! For all we know, you might have faked that photo. Indeed, I hardly—"

"Would it make any difference," Hale interrupted levelly, "if I were to perform the same process before you very eyes!"

Longley laughed harshly. "My cousin only had one cat," he reminded. "Only one to be shot—and later treated by you."

"But there is still—Ryder Strickland!" Hale chafed narrowly.

That stunned even Charlie Griffin. But surprisingly enough, even to Hale, Coroner Wills stifled Longley's quick protest and nodded. "Poetic justice indeed," he reflected. "The murderer to he proved guilty by his own victim's dying eyes! I'll leave it to the jury to—"

"This is preposterous!" It was Walter Bryce who harked the words from his bear-trap mouth. "Such a thing is absolutely—"

"It's hum beef, that's what," Mort Hanley drawled. "The guy's nuts. No court in the U. S. would convict on evidence like that."

"Perhaps it would," Wills snapped. "You gentlemen seem so set on dodging the idea that I think we'll just go through with it. I'll see that the eyes of the corpse are delivered to you at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, Doctor. Court is adjourned until that time!"

CHAPTER III

Eyes in the Dark

BUT John Hale, leaving the basement of the court house, knew there was much to be done before then. A cor-

oner's jury indictment did not necessarily mean the petit jury would convict the guilty man when a regular trial took place. Hale was determined that the proof would indelibly stamp the murderer with his crime. To insure that, he resolved on a desperate plan.

At slightly after one o'clock in the morning he left his luxurious suite in the Town House and drove swiftly to the hotel where Ryder Strickland had been killed. He shut himself in the automatic elevator, pressed the button for floor 12, and set his little black surgeon's bag on the floor.

It was no ordinary bag he carried. As heavy as a chunk of lead, it was crammed full of instruments and chemicals he frequently needed on his cases. His "spectroscopic pistol" was there, used for flashing photographs of objects onto film in the breach. A half-dozen cameras loaded with various special films; an electroscope; racks of bottled chemicals; and a down-to-earth hit of apparatus consisting of a wicked .375 pistol.

On the point of leaving the car, Hale stopped short. Before the door of the murder room a patrolman sat in a chair that was propped against the panel. A cigar alternately grew rosy and gray, as he puffed regularly. A night stick lay across his lap.

Hale thought quickly. He had thought all he would need to get into the room was his bunch of keys. On a sudden decision he slipped his bag back inside the elevator and sauntered down the corridor.

The officer sat up straight when he came near. "What's the trouble, buddy?" he asked narrowly.

Hale smiled blandly, flashed a palmed bunch of shiny keys on the cop, as if they had been a hodge. "House detective," he clipped, and breezed on by. At the end of the hall was a fire exit.

He opened the doors and stood for a moment gazing off over the city.

He glanced back, noting with satisfaction that the smoke from the man's cigar was drawing briskly toward him now. He went back. For just a moment he paused before the night man.

"Couple of complaints about that rope of yours," he explained. "Some people don't know a good cigar when they smell it. I'll leave those doors open 'til the hall airs out."

The officer grinned and became a little red. But he was still smoking when the laboratory sleuth eased the doors shut behind him. Not quite shut, though . . .

Immediately, Hale was working with the little surgeon's bag. He took out a hollow fountain pen and shook some salts into the barrel. He put a couple of other ingredients into it, and then, with the cap in his hand, squeezed one drop of red liquid from an eye-dropper to soak through the mixture. Instantly he capped the pen.

Instead of having a point, it had a sort of nozzle which he now twisted. A jet of white gas hissed from the opening he thus created. The gas, caught by the draft, was sucked down the hall.

Presently the policeman dropped his cigar on the floor. The night stick clattered from his lap. He leaned over to pick it up, and tumbled softly to the carpet where he lay sleeping heavily. Hale shut off the gas, waited for the hall to clear again, and hurried back to the door.

THE fifth key he tried let him into the dark apartment. He closed the door and lighted the flashlight he carried. Swiftly he went to work.

He took down every picture and took the backing off it, examining the back of the picture itself. He took up every rug. The cushions of chairs and daven-

port flew from their places. Finally he stood baffled in the middle of the room, eyes goggling into the darkness, arms crossed, fingers tugging at the lobe of his ear.

In a moment he went into the bedroom and found all of the dead man's effects still there. He worked the place over thoroughly. In the bottom of a suitcase, hidden within the lining, he found the document he was looking for. Briefly he scanned it, put it inside his shoe for safe keeping, then turned to leave.

It was when he was almost to the door that he heard the slight sound . . .

From the blackness hurtled a darker blob of gloom. Fists struck Hale and he went to the floor. He came to his feet like an infuriated, runaway windmill. His long arms, deceptively thin, flailed with the force of rocks swung on strings. Grunts of pain applauded his efforts. He felt big knuckles jolting into his own body. There was lithe, whip-lash power in the sting of those fists. Hale went down again. He felt something cold and wet sopping through the breast pocket of his coat. Then, for the first time, he saw his assailant limned against the window. Instantly Hale took advantage of his momentary break. He had to find out who this man was!

His long body came up like a wraith, right fist coming last, sweeping from the floor with the force of a catapulted stone. The man exhaled his breath in one, wheezing gush as John Hale's knuckles collided with his jaw. He went down like a sack of meal.

Hale's fingers trembled in eagerness as they shuttled over the floor after his flashlight. He found it—just in the moment that he realized the source of the wetness in his pocket. The gas-pen! The man's fist had cracked it open. A numbness, altogether pleasant, came

into the scientist's brain. He had the illusion of diving from a high tower into an ocean of clouds . . . then the floor came up and caught his falling body.

Hale woke to the sense of having just enjoyed a long, restful sleep. His body seemed perfectly at ease. Suddenly, then, remembrance stabbed him. With a start he sat up.

The room was still dark. The flashlight lay at his finger tips, and Hale snapped it on. The murderer had gone, if the murderer it had been. But in the scientist's shoe was a lump that assured him the evidence he had found was still safe. Cautiously, he eased the door open. The officer was snoring a little, now.

It was a rather shaken, apprehensive laboratory sleuth who hurried back to the elevator then. He had risked a lot in coming here. Unless a certain idea he had was right, he stood to face a lot of trouble.

CHAPTER IV

Gentlemen—The Killer!

HALE got his first inkling of the extent of the predicament he was in when he read the morning papers as he breakfasted in the dining room of the hotel. Only by a slow stiffening of the jaw muscles did he show the anger boiling inside him.

"Laboratory Sleuth Claims Picture 'Developed' From Frog's Eyes!" was the banner line. "Pseudo-Scientist Plays Weird Joke," "Chief of Detectives Maxwell Silent On Comic Opera Farce," pyramided their sarcastic messages beneath it.

With every ridiculing word that sprang from the story at him, John Hale grew angrier. He saw himself depicted there as a sort of clown of the scientific world—a "pseudo-scientist" en-

gaged in a publicity stunt. He saw Charlie Griffin and his gruff superior scourged for hohnohning with a "crackpot jack-of-all-sciences, while G-men quietly went about their prosaic methods of apprehending the criminal."

But when a police department shake-up was hinted at, Hale felt a cold wave of guilt sweep him. Griffin had asked his help, of course, but— Just the thought that Ryder Strickland might not have seen his murderer made the scientist a little sick. His appetite for breakfast evaporated, Hale stalked back to his rooms.

Shortly before two o'clock, Charlie shambled in. His face was haggard, the usually firm skin loose and his jaw slack. "Just forget all about it, doc," was his greeting. "If this stunt don't work you'll be ruined. I'll tell the papers it was my idea and clear you an' the boss."

"Forget it nothing!" Hale snapped. "This is my first chance for some really good publicity. I'll make my fortune off the results of this!"

"—or else you'll get your first gray hair," Griffin muttered.

He pivoted to the sound of many footfalls approaching down the hall. Soon the coroner's jury, Coroner Wills, Deputy District Attorney Gans, a small army of reporters, and the three suspects entered the laboratory. The Chief Chemist had come along too, smugly interested in watching a fellow scientist make a fool of himself. Maxwell stayed close to Griffin, his face a granite mask of fatalism.

Now Coroner Wills unwrapped a package and placed a small glass bottle on the sink. "The late Senator's eyes," he clipped. "If you are ready, Doctor, please proceed."

GINGERLY, John Hale's bony fingers closed on the bottle. The

gruesome relics seemed to stare out at him, daring him to pry any knowledge from them. There was a tight feeling about his chest as he immersed the eyes in Bath Number One.

Chief Chemist Stacker winked at one of the reporters. "A solution of your own, Doctor?" he smiled.

Hale did not look up from his work. His slender form was hunched over the beaker. "An organic derivative of coal tar," he muttered. "Treated in a rather new manner."

Stacker said, "I suppose you mix it with the tail of a black cat, in the dark of the moon—?"

Hale's eyes snapped up, blazing with repressed fury. "I mixed it in a mortar and pestle," he breathed. "But perhaps you wouldn't understand that—it's a scientific term."

The chemist flushed darkly as the reporters laughed. From then on he took every opportunity to hamper the scientist in his work.

It seemed hours later, horrible hours of trying to grind down his anger, of fighting shaking nerves, that Hale at last plunged the scalpel into one of the eyes and deftly slipped out the retina. He placed the delicate membrane carefully on a glass slide. Somewhere in him a pulse began hammering, as he made out minute patches of shadow on the film!

Slowly he straightened, to include everyone in the room in a sweeping glance. "I'll ask the Coroner and jury and the three suspected gentlemen to step into the dark room with me. Chief Maxwell, I'd like you and Lieutenant Griffin, too."

The small room would barely hold them all. Hale herded them in and shut the door. Behind the projector stood Water Bryce, pale and tight-lipped, his white hair neatly combed. Almost brushing his broad shoulders was hard-

faced Mort Hanley. A cigarette, smoked down to the very tip, stuck to his lower lip.

Ward Longley looked strangely calm as the climax rushed toward him. Both his hands were shoved deep in his pockets. His pale face was unshaven.

There was a sharp snap, and the room fell dark. Hale sent a dazzling square of light against the screen. Then he was rasping the slide through the aperture. Across the screen moved, in jerky, shaking motions, the figure of— The watchers were not to learn his identity so soon, for suddenly the light in the projector flared bright and went out.

"What's happened? Somebody turn on the lights!" It was the frightened voice of Coroner Wills.

Light came into the room, disclosing John Hale in the act of unscrewing the burned-out bulb with his handkerchief as a hot-pad. "Nothing to be alarmed about," he smiled coolly. "I'll have a new globe in it directly."

When he came back to the dark room, every face was sweaty and drawn. Probably no one suspected that the laboratory sleuth had deliberately burned the bulb out by switching the power to 220 volts. At any rate, the nervous tension he had desired was there now . . .

It seemed to take Hale an inordinate amount of time to get the projector back in working order. He kept fussing with it, snapping on switches here and there and making minute adjustments, until the atmosphere of the room was like that inside a dynamo. In the bright glare of the overhead light, every face was ghastly-white.

Hale straightened, shaking his head ruefully. "I'm afraid, gentlemen—" he began.

Without warning his hand leaped out, striking the wall switch and dashing the

room into blackness. "—I'm afraid we have been suspecting the wrong man! The real murderer is on the screen now!"

AN awful stillness pressed into the dark room. Almost as large as life, the figure of a man loomed on the wall in front of the watchers.

Against the sink he stood, his right arm pointing at an angle toward the floor. A forty-five automatic pistol, its barrel spewing smoke, was gripped in the thick fingers. He was hunched as though just on the point of turning. Across his features, warping them into a mask of bestiality, lay a look of hatred. The face was that of Walter Bryce—

Light poured into the room as the door flew open. Bryce sprang through, squarely into the arms of an officer.

Maxwell slapped a handcuff about one wrist. "How do you explain that, mister?" he barked.

"Seems to me," Bryce panted, "that it's Hale's place to explain. Last night he used his trumped-up invention to pin the murder on Longley. Today I'm the goat!"

There was logic in his words that all saw. Hale hastened to fill the breach.

"I knew as early as yesterday that Ward Longley wasn't the killer of his cousin," he explained. "I found wisps of fabric under the cat's claws and knew it had attacked the murderer of its master and been shot for that loyalty. But that it was cloth from Ward Longley's clothing, I felt certain was impossible.

"Any M. D. would have noticed the cramped condition of the animal's muscles. Clearly they indicated a number of spasms before death occurred. Such spasms might have lasted an hour or more. Obviously, the murderer wasn't going to hang around that long! Thus

I knew that Longley had merely stumbled into the kitchen just as the cat was dying, and his image had been retained on its eyes."

A croak of gratitude came from the dead Senator's cousin. "Not much misses you, does it, doc?" he grinned. "I just dropped in on Ryder about a quarter after ten to visit him, and there he was—dead! The cat looked dead, too, but I guess it wasn't. All I could think of was to head for home—so fast I got pinched!"

"Now that you've got it all figured out to your own satisfaction," Bryce sneered, "suppose you tell us just why I would take such an insane risk?"

"Certainly. For the same reason that you took the risk of returning to the hotel last night—to stop Strickland from making public the proof of your guilt in six cases of lobby bribery! I have the proof here, in Strickland's own handwriting. I'll turn the papers over to you, Mr. Gans."

Walter Bryce seemed to wilt. He was beyond speaking, as the officers headed him toward the door.

The last to leave the room were Chief Maxwell, Charlie Griffin, and one of the news-hawks. The reporter was on pins and needles to be off.

"Got anything you'd like to say, doc," he jerked, "before I phone the story?"

A mischievous twinkle sparkled in Hale's owlish eyes. "You might tell your readers," he said thoughtfully, "that in case any of them wish to try my experiment, to be sure to stir the solutions with the tail of a black cat, in the dark of the moon."

The reporter grinned. "Gotcha!" he nodded. "Anything else?"

"Yes," he added. "Say that without the imagination of Detective-Lieutenant Charlie Griffin, and the cooperation of Chief Maxwell, the murderer would probably never have been trapped."

RIDDLES OF SCIENCE

The Mystery of the MAYA



THE MAYA SETTLED IN GUATEMALA AND HONDURAS, TIKAL BEING THE LARGEST CITY OF THE OLD EMPIRE. BETWEEN 530 A.D. AND 629 A.D. THIS EMPIRE WAS MYSTERIOUSLY ABANDONED, AND A NEW EMPIRE FOUNDED IN YUCATAN, WITH CHICHEN ITZA ITS GREATEST CITY.



WE owe our lack of knowledge of the Maya to the bigotry of one man, Landa, Bishop of Yucatan. After the Spanish conquest, he burned all Maya records with the exception of three astronomical codex. We do know, however, that the Maya were the finest astronomers of history, their calendar accurately covering 53 centuries without error. They were not a scientific race otherwise, being good agriculturists and architects, but not good mechanics. They were a great race, living simply and happily in peace. Today scientific excavation is progressing rapidly, and we may yet solve the mystery of the Maya.

The MAYA CALENDAR DATES ITSELF FROM THE YEAR 3373 B.C. WHICH PLACES THEIR BEGINNING MORE THAN 53 CENTURIES AGO. PRIOR TO THAT TIME, WE HAVE NO HINT OF THEIR ORIGIN. VARIOUS AUTHORITIES TEND TOWARD LEMURIA, ATLANTIS AND ANCIENT NORSE ADVENTURERS . . .



Why WAS THE MAGNIFICENT OLD EMPIRE DESERTED? BECAUSE OF A PLAGUE? AN EARTHQUAKE? OR WAS THE SOIL TOO POOR TO SUPPORT THE GREAT POPULATIONS OF THE CITIES?

BUT EVEN THE NEW EMPIRE WAS DOOMED. THE SPANISH CONQUERORS RUTHLESSLY DESTROYED IT. TODAY SCIENCE STRUGGLES WITH MEANINGLESS HIEROGLYPICS, LOST LANGUAGES, TO READ THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF A GREAT ANCIENT EMPIRE.



She pulled the trigger as Borden Keohane advanced grimly toward her in the lightning's glare

of Death By DON WILCOX

CHAPTER I

Laboratory Eleven

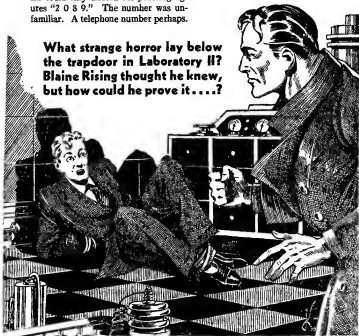
BLAINÉ RISING opened his eyes and stared. Where was he? Lying in a strange bed in a strange white room—apparently in a hospital ward. But how did he get here? How long had he been here?

He scanned the wall. There was a small calendar too far away to be read. He could only discern the puzzling figures "2 0 8 9." The number was unfamiliar. A telephone number perhaps.

Blaine's eyes fell shut. A torrent of thoughts rushed through his mind and at once a single overpowering emotion surged to the surface—revenge! He'd kill Borden Keohane, who had pitched the girl he loved into the icy Pit of Death. Pretty Marcella Kingman—in that pit of horrors!

Blaine tried to leap out of bed but fell back helpless. A terrific pain was

What strange horror lay below the trapdoor in Laboratory II? Blaine Rising thought he knew, but how could he prove it....?



shooting through his head. Again he closed his eyes. The face of the heartless Keohane rose before him—the drooping eyelids, the gray blotch on the cheek, the sneering lips. A burning fever swept through Blaine's prone body. It was his surging, fighting, driving will—to live—to kill!

The will to live—to kill a beast! What else had he to live for now? His scientific career had been shattered, his experiments riddled, and—most tragic of all—his sweetheart, the brilliant dark eyed Marcella, had been sent to the pit of death, a lifeless pillar of ice. Was there anything left in life except revenge? He wondered. As his hazy thoughts cleared, one ray of hope entered his tortured mind. Perhaps one of his experiments would yet prove that there is such a thing as temporary death—perhaps—

As Blaine lay quietly, the events of his conflict with Borden Keohane passed through his feverish brain. . . .

WHEN Blaine Rising first went to work at the Keohane Laboratories everything was lovely—all the equipment he wanted—a free hand to experiment as he pleased—efficient assistants. One of them, Marcella Kingman, was not only an able chemist but also a skillful recorder. For ten weeks Blaine made rapid progress with his two long-dreamed-of experiments—the extension of life, and the suspension of life.

And then one morning the picture changed. Blaine looked up from his desk to see the president of the laboratories standing before him.

"Mr. Rising," the president said crisply, "you are making fine progress. Your genius seems to burn very brightly. However, you should not be burdened with business matters. Your time is too valuable."

"But one of my assistants, Miss

Kingman, is very efficient along this line—"

The president paid no attention to the protest. "I am adding a new official to your laboratory staff, Mr. Rising. I have a nephew who has volunteered to take over the records and business end of this laboratory. I'm sure you two will work together well. He already knows of your experiments, and his own scientific ability should prove useful. His official title will be Superintendent of Laboratory Eleven."

"Superintendent?" Blaine's steel blue eyes turned on the president sharply. "Does that mean he is coming in as my superior?"

"I trust there will be no occasion for that question, Mr. Rising, but if there should be—yes. You are subject to his orders." The president left.

Blaine's heart sank. Could he preserve his newly found scientific paradise under these conditions? His question was soon answered, for the superintendent turned out to be a long forgotten classmate and worst enemy, Borden Keohane—of all people! Somehow he had never associated Borden's name with the Keohane Laboratories.

He took the jolt in silence but inwardly he was deeply angered. It was plain Borden Keohane had tricked his uncle into making him superintendent so he could steal Blaine's ideas. Yes, *steal* them—for that was exactly the way he had coasted through four years of engineering college. At graduation Blaine had breathed a sigh of relief, thinking he was at last through with Borden for life, and now—

"I'M sure you're glad to see me," said Borden with contemptuous sarcasm as he extended a pulpy hand. He had grown heavier and a little whiter in the five years since college. Blaine looked into his eyes. They were the same—ex-

pressionless, half covered by drooping eye-lids. The blotch on his left cheek was barely visible—a blotch reminiscent of Borden's foolhardy experiments in chemistry. Blaine shuddered to think what Borden's rash ways would do for the fine atmosphere of scientific precision of Laboratory Eleven.

Blaine was tempted to say, "I can't hope to carry on scientific investigations under your scrutiny. I *quit!*" But he held his tongue. After all, Laboratory Eleven was still his big chance.

At their first conference Borden abruptly asked, "How soon do you expect to apply the life-suspension principle to human life?"

"Perhaps in ten years. Perhaps twenty," said Blaine.

"I see no reason to wait."

"We wouldn't care to have our first experiment with humans go wrong," said Blaine.

Borden sneered. "Human life is cheap. Already seven convicts have written us offering themselves as subjects. If they're willing to take a chance, why shouldn't we be?"

"I'll take no chances with convicts or anyone else," Blaine asserted, "until I have experimented further with animals. Of course it is well known in the scientific world that instantaneous freezing is not injurious to living tissue. A swift plunge into liquid air will turn a fish into frozen stone on the instant. Those seven convicts doubtless know that the fish thaws out and returns to life as soon as it is tossed back into the fish bowl. But that doesn't prove that we could succeed in a similar experiment with humans."

Borden's lip curled slightly. "And why not?"

"There may be several reasons. At least it seems likely that a large animal can't be frozen as readily as a small one. Of course, as far as we can detect, a fish

and a cat and a small monkey all turn to ice in the same split second, when immersed in our most potent freezing mixture—but can we hope that an elephant, for example, would do the same?"

Borden's face colored and the blotch on his cheek showed pale blue. Blaine's cool scientific caution always burned him up.

"Oh, that's it," he said caustically. "You won't try it on humans because you're afraid it won't work on elephants. Nice logic! However—" here he leveled his eyes at Blaine, "—I notice you've made your trap door big enough to admit a full grown man."

BLAINE did not deny this. All the apertures in his recently constructed unit for instantaneous freezing were of ample size, for there was no telling what the demands of the future might be. This freezing equipment was built in a vertical arrangement. At the top was the small "Trap Room," located in one corner of Laboratory Eleven, with a swift action trap door in the floor. This trap opened into a shaft that descended straight down through the building to the so-called "Pit of Temporary Death" concealed deep in the earth.

Thus, an animal driven to the inner corner of the Trap Room would drop through the trap door and plunge downward. On its descent, after gaining a good speed from the acceleration of gravity, it would pass through a bath of liquid air and would turn instantaneously into a chunk of ice.

Photo-electric cells operated the system of valves through the shaft and set into motion the automatic receiver and distributor at the foot of the shaft. This mechanism couched the fall of each frozen object, to prevent breakage, and carefully deposited each in the next



The animal was frozen instantly and solidly

available space of the pitch-dark Pit of Death, where a temperature of nearly absolute zero was constantly maintained.

After a careful testing of all mechanisms, Blaine had seen to it that the Pit of Death was securely sealed. He realized that the sight of long rows of frozen cats, dogs, and monkeys might create an unfavorable sentiment among some outsiders. Besides, a strong lock would guarantee that *Time* would have a chance to do its work without the interference of meddlers.

Time! That was another thing which galled Borden Keohane. He complained:

"Why drag it out to ten or twenty years? We already know these monkeys stay the same over weeks and months. What can a longer experiment prove?"

"Perhaps nothing," said Blaine. "But on the other hand it may bring to light some unforeseen troubles. After

all, since we can't reduce our subjects to absolute zero we know their molecules are not completely at rest. Are the conditions we have created good for a period of years? Will even the delicate brain tissues come through unaltered? We think so, but we won't be sure until time has done its worst. If those trained monkeys now lying in a frozen state in the Pit of Death will come back to life and do their same tricks twenty years from now, then I'll be convinced we could take a man who is trying to catch a train, freeze him and leave him in cold storage for ten centuries, and when he comes out of it he'd still make a holt for that train. But for the present we need to be patient—and cautious."

"You're too damned cautious," said Borden sullenly.

CHAPTER II

What Is Keohane Doing?

THE police appeared one morning, three weeks after Borden's arrival, in search of a missing boy—an orphan lad who was thought to have applied for work at the Keohane Laboratories. No one in Laboratory Eleven could offer any helpful information. Borden Keohane had interviewed thirty applicants for the position of office boy and had chosen one, but he denied having any particular recollection of the orphan lad. The incident passed over.

However, Blaine's distrust of the "superintendent" sharpened. He slackened his work and spent his daytimes over his desk in a moody study. The assistants grew idle. The word got about that Blaine and Borden were watching each other like hawks because of a long existing professional jealousy. Marcella came to Blaine and said:

"We're ready to go ahead with your

work, Mr. Rising, if—"

"Why are you reporting to me? I'm not your superintendent," said Blaine without looking up.

"That makes no difference to us," said Marcella. Her reassuring words helped to clear the atmosphere for Blaine, as they often had in the past. She continued, "Listen to me, Blaine Rising—"

Her eye caught Blaine's and he realized at the instant what a close understanding had developed between the two of them in the past three months. He knew that somewhere in the hack of his mind there lurked a hidden hope that someday he would share his scientific honors with this beautiful, brilliant, dark-eyed girl. She made no attempt to conceal her honest devotion as she spoke.

"Blaine, are we going to let a mere superintendent spoil the work we have started? Don't you know how eager your assistants are to carry your experiments forward? We have implicit faith—"

In the private conference that followed, Blaine swiftly laid before Marcella his plans for the coming weeks. He instructed her to order a new supply of guinea pigs and monkeys and told her how to go ahead with a completely new series of tests. This was his second long-dreamed-of experiment—the extension of life—to be attempted through a culture of hormones that might prolong the favorable balance between the constructive and the degenerating forces in the living tissues of animals—or humans.

"By all means keep these first serums out of Borden's hands," said Blaine, grinning. "He'd be wild to pour them down a human throat just to see what would happen—and they're a hit too stout for that!"

As she was about to leave, Marcella

asked, "But what of your first experiment—the suspension of life through freezing? Are you going to cease work on it entirely?"

Blaine rose abruptly and said, "Come with me."

They walked across the end of the laboratory through a pathway among tables full of hottles and beakers toward the solid little room in the corner—the Trap Room.

"Securely locked," said Blaine. "Good. We'll leave it that way. For the present we'll do nothing more in the freezing line. The Pit of Death already has nearly a hundred specimens—enough for a fair ten-year test. We'll leave the rest to time. The Pit is securely sealed and it wouldn't be an easy job to cut into it. But this trap room must also be kept locked day and night. Otherwise that trap door might do mischief." In a significant tone he added, "We don't want to lose any more office boys."

Marcella gave a start. "Then you think—"

"You know what happened as well as I do," said Blaine quietly. "I haven't the slightest doubt that the missing Jimmie Brayton, who applied to Borden for work, is two hundred feet beneath us at this moment—a frozen rock on the floor of the Pit of Death."

A THRILL of terror went through Marcella. Blaine, touching her lightly on the arm, sensed the shudder that passed through her body. She was a girl of strong nerves—this Blaine knew—but this implication of treachery was a frightful thing. He tried to soothe her. But it was difficult to speak optimistically of Jimmie Brayton's chances.

"How do you think Borden got away with it?" she asked.

"He probably had the boy come back

late at night to go to work. There's hardly ever anyone here at night. When the boy came, no doubt the rest was easy—for one of Borden's stripe. He probably rapped the lad over the head to lay him out, and then removed his clothes and tossed him onto the trap door—and the rest was automatic. He knows there would be a better chance for a perfect freeze if the clothes were first removed. Then he no doubt destroyed the evidence to the last shoe nail. I've searched the ashes of the laboratory furnace but never found a trace."

"Why do you think he chose Jimmie Brayton?"

"Because he was homeless. No family to stir up a fuss. The only thing that puzzles me is—how did he get into the Trap Room? It is usually locked, and you and I have the only keys."

Marcella shuddered. "I'm going to turn my key back to you this very minute for safe keeping."

She opened the inner compartment of her compact, and gave a stifled cry.

"It's gone," she gasped.

"Lose something valuable, Miss Kingman?" came a sarcastic voice from a nearby doorway. It was Borden Keohane. He had just stepped in.

"A powder puff," said Marcella quickly as she snapped shut her compact.

"Too bad," said Borden, "but perhaps your kind friend Mr. Rising will get you another—particularly if it was your *brass* powder puff."

Blaine stepped toward Borden, clenching his fists and hating his words. "You find Miss Kingman's key and he quick about it!"

Borden grew red with anger, but there was no need to threaten him for he was already extending the key.

"You should be more careful with your property, Miss Kingman. It

might fall into dangerous hands," he said with mock politeness, and walked off.

Blaine muttered. "Ten to one he's had a duplicate made. It's a sure cinch there's trouble ahead."

CHAPTER III

The Life Serum

THE trouble Blaine had predicted was not long in coming to a climax. A few swift months passed in which rapid progress was made in the second of the two great experiments—the extension of life. The staff members worked under the pressure of their own enthusiasm as they saw the rapid results they were achieving. Naturally there was some waste motion at first, for there were no easy paths to follow in working with hormones. But out of Blaine's insight came competent directions, and before long a new hormone serum was being tried on the mice, monkeys, and guinea pigs.

It was a very stimulating medicine. Many of the subjects died during the early days of experimental treatment from excessive heart action. But those that did not die responded favorably in many ways and gave signs of carrying on the functions of life with more than normal vigor. This was a development in the right direction, Blaine said, but the serum was too shocking in its effects upon the constitutions of the subjects.

"Moreover," he explained to the assembled staff, "we have by no means achieved a balanced concoction. This serum may stimulate a favorable metabolic balance in certain types of tissues and still fail to do the same for other types. From our present results, I believe the duration of life of the mice may be doubled or tripled—except for

the fact that the composition of the bone appears to suffer. Our effects are not well proportioned. To use a mechanical illustration, our best subjects still have the failing of some of the automobiles of a few years ago, whose engines were more powerful than their framework."

Blaine concluded his staff meeting by calling for questions. Algo Walderstein, one of the most enthusiastic members of the group, spoke up.

"Isn't our underlying purpose to be able to extend the normal life span of human beings?"

"That is our ultimate purpose," said Blaine.

"Then I have a suggestion," said Walderstein. "Although our most dilute serums are too concentrated for some of our animal subjects, are they necessarily too strong for humans? I think not."

Blaine shot a glance at Borden Keohane, who did not look up. Blaine felt certain this idea had come from him, and he hated to see Walderstein taking up these crackpot notions. Walderstein was a fine fellow and a promising scientist.

"Continue," said Blaine.

"Well, I — for one — have perfect confidence in this serum and I'm ready to give it a try—on myself."

THERE was an instant of tense silence which Blaine quickly broke.

"Walderstein, are you mad? This medicine might kill you!"

Walderstein smiled. "And if it doesn't—I might live to be a hundred and fifty—and the Keohane Laboratories may become world famed for—"

"You're talking wildly," interrupted Blaine. "Why rush into the jaws of death? We've plenty of time to go on perfecting our hormone treatments. What's gotten into you to make you say

these things? Who's been talking to you?"

Borden Keohane felt all eyes turn on him. He jumped to his feet and snarled, "Mr. Rising, I resent that question. As superintendent of Laboratory Eleven I have a right to expect results — as rapidly as they can be achieved. I admire Walderstein for his willingness to take a chance. He's no coward. And let me tell you, Blaine Rising, I'm no coward either. Bring me some of that serum and I'll take it this instant—and live to see the rest of you buried and forgotten. Bring it on. I'll show you I mean it!"

Blaine remained cool under Borden's heated glare. He knew Borden was no coward. He was simply a fool—a fool for quick results. Blaine spoke quietly.

"I appreciate your confidence in the serum. But let me remind you, I am the only one who knows just what its composition is. I have a fair idea of what it might do for the human body. For your own good, Mr. Keohane, I shall do my best to keep it out of your hands until it has been greatly improved. If I allowed you to take it in its present state—and you died—your uncle, the president of these laboratories, would quickly put an end to all our efforts. I'll take no chances. My staff are hereby ordered to report to me their disposal of every drop of this medicine."

As the staff dispersed Borden was still watching Blaine with sullen, half closed eyes. Blaine tightened his lips, tossed his head back confidently, and strode back to work. But he was more worried than ever. He could see that Borden's appeal to scientific courage had made a deep impression on three or four of his assistants, and he foresaw that as the serum improved they would be more easily impressed. Borden had taken to fraternizing with them. This,

to Blaine, was a sure sign of treachery.

That week, before Blaine had found a plan to avert the impending crisis, the first blow was struck. A telephone call announced that Algo Walderstein was dead. He had died suddenly as he was starting to work. The coroner's verdict was heart failure.

Laboratory Eleven paid its respects to a beloved member and returned to work. A chill spirit pervaded the days that followed. Blaine's orders became cold and harsh. Marcella's cheery smile was withheld. Borden's obvious efforts to whip up a congenial spirit were mere mockery. For Algo Walderstein was dead. He had taken a long chance and lost.

If Blaine had any written formulas for the new serum, no one knew where they were kept. He now went on a new schedule, working through the nights and catching a little sleep through the daytimes. In the mornings when his assistants arrived he presented each with the materials they needed and with a sheet of explicit orders for the work of the day. There was very little talk. It was as if the assistants were working under the silent system of a prison—but in spite of the silence there was one thing that every member of the staff knew: The serum was improving daily. The reactions of the animal subjects were proving that.

CHAPTER IV

Keohane's Plans

MARCELLA missed Blaine's companionship terribly. Once a few days ago he had kissed her for the first time. It had happened at the close of a long day, after the rest of the staff had gone. She and Blaine had stood at one of the windows watching the snow float down upon the roofs below them

and the lights from the streets sparkle through the falling snow. They had exchanged confidences about their hopes and dreams of life, and several breathless kisses had passed between them.

Those moments were to have happened again and again—and then—Walderstein's death—and this frigid atmosphere had suddenly swept down upon everyone. Now Marcella refrained from searching Blaine's eyes for a reassuring look. If his genius could withstand the threatening pressures from Borden that was all she could hope for at present. But through the nights she would awaken and gaze from her apartment window toward the tiny squares of green light many blocks away where she knew Blaine was at work in Laboratory Eleven—and in such sleepless hours she dared to dream that those enraptured moments would soon return.

"All employees of the Keohane Laboratories are invited to attend an informal party on the evening of Saturday, February 27, eight o'clock, at the Morse Hotel. This party is given in observance of the thirty-third anniversary of the founding of the Keohane Research Laboratories. There will be dancing throughout the evening in the grand ball room, while elsewhere there will be several demonstrations and lectures, including a lecture on "Scientific Courage" by Borden Keohane, Superintendent of Laboratory Eleven. Come and enjoy—and inform—yourself!—President R. H. Keohane."

BLAINE tossed the invitation and other items of the morning mail to one side of his desk and prepared to leave. Marcella came to him hastily. He read anxiety in her face.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Borden Keohane."

Blaine was alarmed. "What has he done now?"

"He asked me to go with him—to the party."

"Oh. What did you tell him?"

"That I've already promised to go with you. I—I hope you won't be angry."

Blaine pressed her hand. "You did the right thing. I wouldn't have you go out with that devil for a million dollars."

"Thank you, Blaine."

"I'll come by for you at any time you say. It will be my first night away from this laboratory for weeks, but under the circumstances it seems the best thing to do. Things will be safe here as long as Borden is at the party."

Blaine and Marcella arrived at the party late. The few moments together in the taxi meant far more to them than the festivities, but they knew it was well to be present as a matter of form.

"Are your worries all brushed aside for the evening?" Marcella asked. Blaine smiled at her. She was a gorgeous thing in her yellow evening dress, her dark, liquid eyes smiling at him. It would have been only too easy to brush aside all cares and worries—to forget the bitter fight he was having to wage every minute of his life to protect his scientific dreams.

"Almost," he said, taking her into his arms and gliding onto the floor among the other dancers. "If you'll forgive one little precaution—I'll feel perfectly at ease as soon as I'm sure Borden is here and not somewhere else."

They danced to the far end of the room and walked over to one of the doors. The sign beside it announced continuous lectures throughout the evening by Borden Keohane. And the

echo of Borden's voice coming through the loud speaker could be heard at the door.

"There," said Marcella with charming reassurance. "No more worries for the evening." Yet even as she spoke she felt a fear that her words would mock her before the evening was past. An hour later when the party was in full sway she urged that they pause before the door of the lecture room again. Blaine was only too willing. His growing suspicion was evident. They listened. Borden's voice could be heard as before.

"I'm not convinced," said Blaine. "Let's go in."

The doorman stopped them saying, "This lecture is almost finished. Wouldn't you rather come back in ten minutes for the next one?"

TEN minutes later they were seated on the front row in the lecture room. The house lights went off. The murmurs of the scattered audience hushed. As the curtain rose, the figure of Borden Keohane was already standing there, perfectly motionless, at one side of the stage in a very dim light. There appeared to be a microphone nearby. At once the pictures flashed onto the screen and Borden's voice accompanied them.

"Now see what we've let ourselves in for," Marcella whispered. "We'll have to listen for thirty minutes—or will we?"

Several seconds passed before Blaine answered. Then:

"Have you seen him move yet?"

"I haven't noticed." They watched intently. "It's too dark to see his face," Marcella whispered.

"Then watch closely," said Blaine, drawing a small flashlight from his pocket. Light shot upon the figure.

"Did you get it?"

"A dummy," Marcella gasped. "What we hear must be a recording."

"A hoax on me," said Blaine, setting his teeth. "It's a thousand to one he's going through my formulas this very minute. I've got to get out of here!"

They bolted for the nearest exit.

A taxi spun them across the city toward the Laboratories. Soon they caught sight of the building.

"Don't I see a dim light in the windows?" said Blaine.

"Yes. Laboratory Eleven."

"Then he's there. I'll drop you off at your apartment. You mustn't get mixed up in this." He called to the driver to stop.

"No!" cried Marcella. "I'm going with you. He'll be desperate."

"I can take care of myself in any fair fight," said Blaine.

"Fair fight! You're not talking about Borden! No, I won't get out! I'm coming with you!"

The taxi stopped at Marcella's address and Blaine lifted her out even though she was sobbing her protests.

"Don't go up there alone, Blaine, please—"

"I've got to stop him—before he ruins everything—"

Marcella was clutching toward him frantically but he pushed her arms away. He jumped into the taxi and sped off.

Marcella stood there helpless. There were no other taxis in sight. A storm was gathering overhead. Thunder was crackling and heavy raindrops were beginning to spatter.

CHAPTER V

Battle in Laboratory Eleven

THE elevators at the Keohane Laboratories were not running at that hour of the night. Eleven floors to

climb. Blaine's heart was racing as he gained the last flight of stairs. In the dark corridor there was a weak gleam of light from the large laboratory beyond. He stopped and listened. He could hear nothing except a slight rustle from a nearby room that contained guinea pigs. A flurry of lightning revealed only an empty corridor before him.

He started to switch on the lights—then stopped. Sounds were reaching him from the laboratory—footsteps—the turning of a stout lock—the opening of a heavy door. He knew those sounds perfectly. Borden had opened the door to the Trap Room.

What could that mean? Only one thing. Another victim for the Pit. Had Borden interpreted Blaine's approaching footsteps as the arrival of the victim? Blaine wondered.

It was plain that Borden had planned this night carefully. He had kept a key to the Trap Room and bided his time for a chance to use it. He had schemed the party to have Blaine safely out of the way. What other preparations had he made? How desperate would he dare to be if Blaine confronted him coolly and ordered him out? Blaine had plunged blindly into this dangerous situation—unarmed. With jaw set and eyes alert he moved toward the open door from which the dim light issued.

He stopped in the doorway. His eyes took in the laboratory at a glance. The only light in the large room came from the desk light at his own desk. His files had been opened and his notes were scattered. Near the outer edge of the circle of dim light he could discern the bottle of hormone serum on a work table. The seal over its stopper had not been broken. Beyond, at the far corner of the room deep in the shadows, the door to the Trap Room stood open. Borden was standing near it with his

face turned toward Blaine.

"What's up?" said Blaine sharply.

"Come in," said Borden. "I've been waiting for you."

"You needn't wait any longer," said Blaine, marching over to his desk. "What's the meaning of this mess?"

Borden advanced a step. Blaine could see a fanatic gleam in his eyes.

"I've been waiting for you," he repeated in an evil tone.

"You'll kindly lock that Trap Room before you go," said Blaine. "You've no business opening it."

"Oh, is that so?" said Borden mockingly. "Who is the superintendent here anyway?" He advanced another step, then another—stealthily—like an animal approaching his prey. He stopped before the work table and placed his hand upon the bottle of serum.

"I was on the verge of using this when I heard you coming. You're late. I expected you an hour ago. Surely that electrical recording didn't keep you fooled all this time. It must have been the girl friend—"

"Be careful how you talk," Blaine snapped. He was now standing at the opposite side of the work table glaring at Borden with eyes that flashed like a steel blade.

"Now that you've finally come, you and I are going to talk business, Mr. Rising. As your superintendent I have decided it's time for you and me to show our colors. It's time to prove our experiments. It's time to prove we're not cowards—or if we are—to find it out."

BLAINÉ laughed in disgust. "You're a fool, Keohane."

Borden's face heated with anger. "I'm in authority here," he rasped, "and you're going to listen to me." He swung the bottle upward in his clenched fist as he gestured in fury.

"Put that down!" Blaine roared.

"I'll put it down all right," Borden snarled. "I'll put it to good use in about two minutes. But first, my dear Mr. Rising, you have a little duty to perform." He made a gesture of mock graciousness toward the open door of the Trap Room. "You may come back and see us in a few years—maybe ten—maybe twenty. There's no great hurry in matters of this kind," he added sarcastically, placing the bottle of serum in his coat pocket. Then suddenly changing to a violent manner he whipped out a small revolver. "Will you go to the Pit like a man—or must I drive you in with this? Get out of those clothes!"

Blaine did not move.

"Get out of them before I fill you full of lead."

"You wouldn't shoot," said Blaine, glaring across the table. "You wouldn't get any pleasure out of sending a dead man to the Pit."

"You underestimate the pleasure I would get out of killing you. Get over there! GET OVER THERE!"

Blaine remained motionless. He was wondering how long Borden had been insane and whether he was not a paranoid—suffering from delusions of persecution—building up in his mad mind a plot to extinguish his associates of Laboratory Eleven who so obviously distrusted him.

"All right!" screamed Borden, "you can have it!"

Blaine's fist shot out. The revolver barked. The bullet went wide, splintering some glass beakers. A shower of broken glass and chemical solutions splattered over Blaine's open desk a few feet away.

Borden was staggering backward from the blow, but the revolver was still in his fingers. As Blaine leaped over the table toward him he pulled the trigger again. Click! The weapon had

jammed. Blaine was upon him. Again the gun clicked. It was dead. Borden swung it at Blaine's head. Blaine caught his wrist in mid-air and the revolver flew from his hand, crashing into the light at the desk. There was a dazzling flash and a puff of smoke as the chemicals on the desk exploded, and suddenly there was near-darkness in the room.

Under the rain of Blaine's blows Borden had gone down in a heap. He was the heavier of the two but he was no match for Blaine. There was a dim flickering light now. Blaine did not have time to see where it was coming from, for Borden was coming up again. Blaine pulled him to his feet, dodged his wide swing, and struck him down again with a cooling blow. He made no effort to rise.

NOW Blaine turned to more important business—the source of the flickering light. The explosion had set fire to the papers on his desk and the flames were licking over the files and the scattered notes, consuming data that represented years of labor—papers that held secrets of science nowhere else recorded. Blaine tore off his coat and lashed the flames frantically. With every slashing stroke the room grew darker.

Before extinguishing the last flame Blaine looked toward Borden who was still lying on the floor as if helpless. Blaine snapped the last flame out and groped through the darkness toward a light switch. He reached for his flashlight only to discover it had been broken in his pocket.

He stopped short. Footsteps were sounding on the stairs. He knew those footsteps. They were Marcella's.

"Blaine," she called, "are you all right?"

A flurry of lightning revealed her as

she stepped inside the doorway at the opposite side of the room.

"Yes," Blaine answered. "Give me a light."

She snapped the switch. "They're off," she called.

Blaine tried a nearby switch with the same negative result. "We've blown a fuse."

Now Borden was stirring. It was too black to see him, but Blaine could hear him moving stealthily at a little distance. On the instant he realized what a dangerous situation was at hand. A mad scientist in a black room, bent on seizing a human victim. The terror of the situation was redoubled by Marcella's presence. A moment ago Blaine had been whipping the flames as if there was nothing more worth saving than his formulas. Now at the sound of Marcella's frightened voice he knew there was something more important to him. No greater danger could befall this girl than to enter the present scene of violence. For the door to the Trap Room was still yawning hungrily, and the violent Borden was moving about somewhere in the blackness.

"Get out of here, Marcella! Quick! Get out of the building! You're in danger! Don't ask any questions! Hurry!"

He started toward Marcella's side of the room. There was a brilliant flash of lightning. For an instant he saw the girl standing near the doorway—a beautiful figure in her evening dress. So vividly did the purple lightning reveal every detail of the picture that Blaine caught sight of her wind-blown hair and the splattered mud on her slippers and her dress. So she had run through the storm to come to him! But before the flash of lightning was gone he saw the courage in her eyes giving way to terror. He whirled to try to catch a glimpse of Borden. Too late.

Again there was nothing but thick blackness.

"Look out!" Marcella screamed. "He's throwing something!"

CHAPTER VI

Into the Pit

A FLYING object whizzed through the black air. Blaine leaped in the dark but the missile found its mark. He took the blow across the head and went down, the sound of his fall drowned in a roar of thunder.

"Blaine! Blaine!" Marcella called in vain. The only answer was more crashing thunder, and after it died away—the sound of Borden's swift footsteps. Marcella called again in a terrified voice. No answer.

But for her strong nerves she would have been wild with fright and would have given way to her impulse to scream at the top of her voice. She was thinking fast. Could she reach a telephone? There would be none operating in this part of the building. Should she run for help? No, for she had glimpsed the open Trap Room and understood. It was up to her to fight off Borden until Blaine regained consciousness—or was he dead? She listened.

Click! Borden was locking her in. Now he was only a few feet back of her, making a round of all the doors. She groped her way swiftly and silently among the tables toward the middle of the room. Click. Borden was locking the farthest door. Now his footsteps were coming toward her. His voice sounded through the darkness. It was his sneering laugh. He was gloating in his capture.

"Well, well, how fortunate that you have joined us, Miss Kingman. I'm sorry our lights are off so I can't see to greet you, but I think I know where

to put my hands on a flashlight . . . Yes, here we are."

Marcella slid under a table and pulled the folds of her evening dress after her—barely in time. Borden flashed the beam of a sickly flashlight about the room.

"Oh, you're hiding from me, are you? That's all right. Just so you don't go away. We're going to have a nice little party right away—just the three of us. If you'll only come out like a nice girl, we'll get your part of it over before the boy friend wakes up."

Marcella held her breath. It seemed that her thumping heart would betray her place of hiding. Borden started across the room. She watched sharply as the light from the waving flashlight skipped along the aisle toward the table under which she crouched. As Borden came abreast of her she thought the beam of light surely caught the corner of her dress. But Borden evidently did not see it, for he marched on across the room, talking as he went.

"So you prefer to stay hid, do you? A nice little game of hide and seek? That's all right. It will give me time to swing a cord around your boy friend's hands and feet—just to make sure he cooperates. He might wake up and change his mind."

Now Marcella could see Blaine lying in a heap. At least he was breathing, but his head was seeping blood. Borden was examining him cautiously. A mess of ruins lay a few feet from them in the edge of the light—several broken beakers and half burned formulas and—Marcella's heart leaped at the sight—a small revolver. Cautiously she slipped from one table to the next.

ALREADY the terrorist had bound Blaine securely and he was taking pains with the knots. He was being deliberate now, as if confident that he

could proceed with his little party in his own way—now that Blaine was out. He put his head down to listen to the breathing of his victim.

"Yes, it's a good thing I wrapped you up, old man. You're feeling pretty good. In another minute or two you'll be popping your eyes open and wanting to fight, but I think you'll just lie quiet in your hobbles until we get this over with. It won't take long. I'll have you ready for refrigeration right away. By the way, what's happened to the girl friend?"

He shot the light around. Marcella's heart beat loudly as she crouched in the shadows. She knew that the light would not catch her unless Borden went down to look under the tables. If he did—she would make a break for the revolver.

"All right, sweetheart," he goaded, "just stay out of sight till I'm ready for you. And you'd better turn your head for I'm about to deprive your boy friend of his clothes. We don't want any half-way freezing jobs."

He laid the dimly burning flashlight down on the floor and began removing Blaine's shoes. Blaine stirred.

"Don't wake up, my genius friend," Borden soliloquized in a sarcastic vein—and Marcella knew he was speaking for her benefit. "Don't wake up. In three minutes you'll have the rare pleasure of being converted into human ice, and you'll never know what happened—or how anxious your girl friend was to follow you down the shaft. You can both have a good long sleep without being disturbed. And when you wake up twenty or thirty years from now, drop in and see me. I think you'll find me in the bloom of health and youth."

Borden hesitated as if a question had interrupted his chain of happy thoughts. He patted his hands against his coat

pocket. He was making sure the bottle of serum had come through the recent fight unbroken. Satisfied, he resumed his monologue.

"Yes, I think you'll find me in the bloom of—"

"Hands up!" cried Marcella.

BORDEN whirled about. There was a revolver pointing at him from out of the deep shadows. His hands obeyed the command. He gazed at the dim figure of Marcella—her keen eyes piercing him—her wild hair—her mud-splattered evening dress.

"So you thought you'd pull a fast one on me, did you?" he snarled. "Since when did you go in for fire-arms?"

He was aware that Marcella was fearless. There was no reason she shouldn't shoot to kill. But where had she gotten that revolver? He hacked up a step. His eye scanned the floor and he was convinced. Now the cards were all his if he played his hand swiftly. The deck had been stacked in his favor. With a cynical smirk he said, "Is that any way to treat your superintendent?"

His hands came down in a gesture of mock politeness.

"Put 'em up!" Marcella commanded, "or I'll shoot you on the spot!"

"Not with *that* gun, sweetheart!"

She pulled the trigger. Click! Again. And a third time. With each snap of the trigger she retreated farther back into the shadows. The gun was dead. Her heart sank. It was obvious now that she stood no chance against the heartless Borden. There would be no use trying to talk past him. He had waited too long for just such a moment. His half closed eyes shifted from her to the open Trap Room and back to her again, and his mouth spread in a grin of insidious victory.

"Don't go away," he said. "I'm changing the order. I'll let you be first. Ladies first, you know. You'll find everything all ready for you—a nice cool plunge into liquid air—"

"Don't come near me, you brute!"

"Be calm, my dear. The easiest way would be for you to step into the Trap Room, close the door like a lady, and slip out of your clothes before you walk across the trap. That would assure you a clean-cut freeze—and I hate to see experiments bungled, especially with such prize subjects."

"Get away from me!"

Through the dim light she darted across the room to her only hope—the fire escape. A blaze of lightning helped her pick her path, but before the thunder struck full force the mad Borden had cornered her. She fought like a panther. Borden caught her wrists—lost them—caught them again—dragged her across the floor toward the Trap Room. She kicked and squirmed and fought. The slippers lost off her feet.

Blaine had begun to mumble. He was returning to a hazy consciousness.

"Shut up!" Borden roared at him. "I'll get to you in a minute!"

Blaine's eyes grew wide as he began to realize where he was and what was happening. The mad man was dragging the fighting body of Marcella past him. He wriggled in his bonds helplessly. He was powerless to interfere.

There was no lightning to illuminate the brutality of the next few seconds, but Blaine's eyes following the struggling, shadowy figures could not mistake what happened. Borden swiftly pulled the writhing girl into the Trap Room, hurled her down upon the trap door, and ripped the dress off her body as she fell out of sight.

Click! The automatic trap was shut.

Blaine heard a muffled "O-o-o-o-oh!"

—a cry of terror but not a scream. The pitch of her cry lowered as her fall accelerated. Then it was cut off and only its hollow echoes reverberated through the shaft.

THAT cry left Blaine incredibly weak. He ceased to struggle. He was appalled. Keohane emerged from the Trap Room. He picked up Marcella's slippers. Her rent clothes were under his arm. He took the articles to the laboratory furnace, thrust them in, and turned the blast on full. He returned for Blaine's shoes.

"Don't be impatient, Rising," he called as he thrust them into the furnace. "I'll get to you in just a moment. But shoes are devilish slow to burn, and I don't want to be here all night finishing up. Besides, I've got myself to work on yet, you know."

He patted his coat pocket again and registered satisfaction.

"Fortunately, our serum has come through safe and sound."

He removed his coat, put it out of the way, and came down to where Blaine was lying.

"And now I'll ask you to cooperate like a gentleman while your superintendent prepares you to drop down and join your girl fr—"

His speech was cut short. Blaine, hound though he was, rolled into him with such violence that he toppled to the floor. With a scared shriek he barely scrambled out of reach of Blaine's clutching fingers. Even when hound Blaine seemed a dangerous adversary. If Borden had any more taunting remarks, he withheld them. He was pale with fright. Still he was possessed by the flaming madness to finish the murderous business he had started. His movements became swifter, more nervous—his eyes more insane.

He snatched up the dying flashlight

and sought out the piece of lead pipe he had hurled at Blaine's head a few minutes before.

Blaine saw him advancing and knew his time had come.

A second later all lights went out for Blaine and the rumbling thunder was no longer audible to him.

CHAPTER VII

Strange Revenge

IN his hospital bed Blaine pondered these events. His memory could not carry him beyond that second blow on the head. What had happened then? Had someone intruded upon the scene and stopped the insane Borden? Had an ambulance come for him to bring him to this hospital? He did not know. He only knew that he burned to wreak a swift revenge upon the mad Keohane. He would act—as soon as his physical condition would permit.

With this decision he relaxed into a deep, restoring sleep, and when he awoke many hours later the pain in his head had eased. There was food on the stand beside his bed which he ate with a vigorous appetite. His strength was returning. He got out of bed, slipped into a lounging robe, and walked over to the window. There was a glorious view before him—a most beautiful city with futuristic towers, elevated highways, and swiftly moving traffic. Strangely, he could not bear a sound, nor could he see any smoke.

There were bullet-nosed cars speeding along the broad highways. Above the buildings the air was dotted with what appeared to be individual helicopters that were hopping about from rooftop to rooftop as cunningly as birds. High overhead were thin streams of air traffic shooting in different directions at different levels. It was unbelievable—this magic picture before him.

He rubbed his eyes. Could it be—

A nurse entered the room. She greeted him and expressed her surprise to see him walking about. "You seem to be gaining rapidly," she said, after taking his pulse and his temperature.

"Yes," said Blaine. "Where am I? What's the meaning of all this? Am I seeing things or—"

"You'd better get back in bed and rest some more. There will be several physicians coming in to visit you as soon as you are a little stronger so you'd better save your questions for them. They'll have several to ask you, too."

She started to leave.

"Wait," Blaine called. "There's something I want you to tell me. Do you know a Borden Keohane?"

The nurse looked at him quizzically. "You mean—the famous Borden Keohane? Why, of course I know him. Everybody in the medical world knows about him, but we in this hospital are particularly fortunate in being able to observe him. He is one of the most unique cases on record, you know."

"Did you say you *observe* him?"

"Certainly. We have a special room for him at the further end of this floor. Physicians come here from all over the world to—"

"He's *here* — in this building?"

Blaine grew tense. The heat of revenge swept through him. "I must see him!"

"Perhaps later — after you are stronger—but now you must rest. Remember, many eminent men of science will wish to interview you as soon as you are able—Oh, I almost forgot to tell you, I'm allowing you one visitor this morning — a young lady. Here she comes now."

The nurse left. Blaine stood bewildered. What was the meaning of the curious things she had said about Borden Keohane? Why should he be

suddenly famous in the medical world? Was it possible that—

His thoughts were cut short. Before him in the doorway stood a young, dark-eyed girl, radiantly beautiful.

"Marcella!" he gasped.

"Blaine!"

THEY were in each other's arms.

"I can't believe it, Marcella. Has it really happened? You've gone through the Pit of Death and come out alive?"

"Yes, Blaine," said Marcella, glowing with happiness. "We've both gone through the Pit of Death, and here we are—just as we were before. My, you're looking wonderful, Blaine, for one who has been dead a century and a half!"

"What?"

"Yes, Blaine. It was a hundred and fifty years ago that you and I—"

"Why, it's incredible!"

"That's exactly what the other scientists are saying. But they know it's true. And Blaine, we're not a day older. There's a new world waiting for us to explore. Hurry up and gain your strength back. I've been back to life for three days now—and I'm getting anxious to see this new world—as soon as you're ready to go with me. Those injuries on your head were pretty bad. You haven't come out of it so easily."

"I feel strong," said Blaine. Marcella looked at him sharply. There was an ominous sound in his voice. "I'm strong enough for the first task I must do."

"What's the matter, Blaine?" Marcella spoke with alarm.

"Do you know that Borden Keohane is still alive? Do you think I'm going to plunge into life again until I've first settled my score with him? There isn't room in the world for the two of us. Not until I've crushed out his miserable

life can I look the world in the eye. And the quicker I act the better."

Blaine was already striding down the hallway.

"No, Blaine, you mustn't!" Marcella cried as she tried to force him back. "You don't understand. We've nothing to fear. That's all gone. A century and a half in the past."

But her pleading could not halt Blaine. The fires of violent hatred engendered in his breast on the night of Borden's insane brutality had not been extinguished by the icy interlude of one hundred and fifty years. His tense fingers gathered strength for a choking death grip as he bolted toward the farthest room. Marcella followed him crying, "No, no, no, Blaine you don't know what you are doing!" But he would not listen.

He entered the open door at the end of the hallway, Marcella following. An attendant confronted him.

"Is Borden Keohane here?" he demanded.

"Yes," said the attendant with a gesture toward the object at the center of the room. Blaine looked. It was a bed with high sides that hid the occupant from view. The air of the room was heavily laden with incense that was almost stifling, as if mingled with fetid odors. The effect was somewhat subduing to Blaine's fury. The walk had been too strenuous for him. He spoke less brusquely.

"You mean—he's a patient here?"

"Certainly," said the attendant. "He has been for about seventy-five years."

"Oh," Blaine breathed heavily.

"I was trying to tell you—" said Marcella at his side.

Blaine broke in anxiously. "Will he—live—long?"

The attendant smiled. "That's the very question that has all the physicians baffled. He seems to be so near

death—and yet he lives on, year after year."

"I must see him," said Blaine.

"Let me warn you that the sight is extremely repulsive," said the attendant. "You see, his bones have been completely decomposed. Why—nobody knows, although the theory is that he must have used some sort of hormone serum earlier in his life, the formula of which is a mystery."

"I understand," said Blaine quietly.

"Doesn't he give any explanation for his own condition?" Marcella asked.

"Not to my knowledge. Of course he has been unable to talk for many years. As his bones were eaten away he became a formless mass with almost no use of his voluntary muscles. Even his breathing is cared for mechanically. It is very difficult to move him, even in his bed, without injuring him. For his eyes no longer have any protective sockets and of course his brain is inclosed in nothing but a covering of loose skin and hair. No jaws. No teeth. Only loose flesh. If you wish to see

him, you may. But don't expect him to look like a human being."

Blaine and Marcella glanced over the high sides of the bed at the curious mass of aged, wrinkled flesh before them—the exposed upper half of a shapeless human body, partially encased in instruments. The misshapen eyes were closed. The object did not move. There was only one familiar detail—a gray-white blotch on what had once been a cheek.

One look was enough. Marcella and Blaine walked out in silence.

"You were speaking of—revenge?" Marcella asked.

"Yes," said Blaine quietly, "but I had never intended anything so horrible as Borden has brought upon himself."

They stopped at a window and looked down upon the glorious picture—a futuristic city gleaming in the morning sunshine.

"It's a new world," Marcella said.

"A new world," said Blaine, smiling at her, "and we have life before us."

THE END.



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Science Quiz

SELECTION TEST

Check the true statement:

1. Liquid ozone is: colorless, deep blue, purple, black, yellowish.

2. The formula Fe_2O_3 is the formula for: chromium oxide, ferric oxide, fluorine, sodium sulphate, calcium sulphate.

3. The discoverer of hydrogen was: Priestly, Cavendish, Rutherford, Boyle, Newton.

4. Lavoisier first fully recognized the: law of constant properties, law of conservation of matter, law of equivalent or combining weights, law of conservation of energy.

5. During a physical chemical change: all energy is destroyed, there is an energy change, the chemical is altered.

6. The earth's mean density as compared with water is: 1.02, 3.57, 4.28, 5.55, 6.19, 7.73.

7. The speed of the earth in its orbit around the sun is: 10 kilometers per second, 20 kilometers per second, 30 kilometers per second, 45 kilometers per second.

8. The first known telescopic drawing of Mars was made by: Galileo, Perrine, Huyghens, Melotte, Nicholson.

9. The orbital velocity of Venus is: 22 mi/sec, 36 mi/sec, 50 mi/sec, 75 mi/sec, 15 mi/sec, 42 mi/sec.

10. The famous theory of tidal evolution was first elaborated by: Darrow, Kepler, Darwin, Pythagoras, Aristarchus.

11. The branch of physical science that deals with the analysis of light is called: astronomy, spectroscopy, spectrophotology, spectrophotography, helioscopy.

12. The brilliant visible surface of the sun is called the: chromosphere, lithosphere, photosphere, hydrosphere, hemisphere.

13. Sun spots were first seen by: Galileo, Scheiner, Slipher, Anderson, Maxwell, Lebedew.

14. The comet with the smallest orbit is: Halley's, Encke's, Pluto's, Paragould's, Biela's, Donati's.

15. The name of element 87 is: Ilium, Alahamine, Virginium, Osmium, Corundum.

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Every chemical change is accompanied by a definite energy change. *True.... False....*

2. The units of positive electricity in atoms are called protons. *True.... False....*

3. The air from an electric fan will not affect a thermometer at all. *True.... False....*

4. The wait as an electrical measure was adopted by an act of congress. *True.... False....*

5. A point of the compass is equal to $11\frac{3}{4}^\circ$. *True.... False....*

6. The first lightning rod in the world was set up by Benjamin Franklin. *True.... False....*

7. Sound does affect the growth of vegetation. *True.... False....*

8. Carbonado is most desirable for use in diamond drills. *True.... False....*

9. There are no stars as large as the distance from the earth to the sun. *True.... False....*

10. The force of gravity at the sun's surface is $33\frac{1}{2}\%$ as great as gravity at the surface of the earth. *True.... False....*

11. The moon is brighter in the first quarter than in the third quarter. *True.... False....*

12. Greenwich Observatory was founded by King Charles II in 1675. *True.... False....*

13. Matter can be destroyed and created. *True.... False....*

14. The water of Lake Utah, one of the sources of Great Salt Lake, is a body of salt water. *True.... False....*

15. The Rocky Mountains are growing higher. *True.... False....*

SCRAMBLED SCIENCE TERMS

1. Name of a geological period. LOCHOENE

2. A weedy sea. RAGSOSSA

3. A contribution to successful surgery. THES-TANACIE

4. Disease. BETURLOCSUIS

5. A noncombustible mineral. BETSAOSS

STRIKE OUT THE WORD THAT DOES NOT CONFORM

1. Guitar, mandolin, violin, insulin, harp, viola.

2. Rabbit, rat, gopher, whippet, porcupine.

3. Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Aquila, Equinoxes, Lyra, Cygnus.

4. Curlew, ibis, Kingfisher, Hoatrin, Crane, Heron.

5. Pine, Tamarack, Cedar, Spruce, Magnolia, Balsam.

PROBLEM

Two cowboys were sent out on the ranch to round up the herd for driving to better pasture and water. At one time in the search for cattle they were riding just twenty miles apart. At that distance they started toward each other at the rate of 10 miles per hour. At the same time a horsefly started flying back and forth from one horse to the other at the rate of 15 miles per hour. How far did the horsefly travel until the riders met?

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

This department will be conducted each month as a source of information for our readers. Address your letters to Question and Answer Department, AMAZING STORIES, 909 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Q. Is there any kind of metal that will absorb moisture, or liquid, or that has been specifically created for that purpose?—John Muth, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A. Yes. A form of bronze has been perfected in the laboratories of the General Motors Corporation that is so porous it will soak up oil like a sponge. The quantity of oil it will absorb equals one-fourth its own mass.

Q. What are birthmarks, and what causes them?—George Mack, Oconto, Wisconsin.

A. Birthmarks are blemishes on the skin, and they are indeterminate in cause. However, they probably are purely accidental, being caused by numbers of small blood vessels near the surface of the skin, which produces the coloration.

Q. At what age does the brain reach its full size and weight?—Mrs. L. G. C., Washington, D. C.

A. Although the brain usually does not grow as much in proportion to the rest of the body, since it is almost fully developed at birth, it reaches full size and weight at the same time the rest of body maturation is completed, that is, between the ages of 22 and 25.

Q. Where is the Earth's crust thinnest at the present time?—Miss Elizabeth Godwin, 5119 Field Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

A. The shell of the earth beneath the Pacific Ocean is relatively thinner than it is in any other part of the world. The Nero Deep near the Island of Guam is 5,269 fathoms, or approximately six miles deep. This depth of water reduces the thickness of the Earth's crust by just so many miles, accepting the theory of constant increase of heat with descent toward the molten interior as truth.

Q. How many years ago was the Colorado River at the rim of the Grand Canyon?—A. B., New York City.

A. The geological survey says that in geologic terms the period which has elapsed since the Colorado River began to cut the Grand Canyon is not determined very closely, and an attempt to put it into years is speculative. It might be as much as ten to fifteen million years.

Q. Why doesn't the Leaning Tower of Pisa fall? B. H., Providence, R. I.

A. The fact that the Leaning Tower of Pisa stands depends on the law of statics, which ensures the stability of the leaning buildings whose parts are firmly bound together and whose center

of gravity does not project beyond the limits of the supporting foundation. The Leaning Tower has a spiral staircase within, which is built with increased height on the side of the lean, and decreased heights on the side opposite the lean, thus throwing a greater weight of masonry on the side opposed to the lean.

Q. What is an empirical formula?—Frederick Pohlman, 417 4th Street, Ishpeming, Mich.

A. It is a chemical formula expressing merely the results of a quantitative analysis.

Q. I have heard of a prehistoric animal being found in an Alaskan glacier. What kind of animal was it?—D. P., Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

A. The remains of a strange animal found in an Alaskan glacier in November, 1930, were identified as those of a prehistoric whale.

Q. How are the sites for observatories chosen?—J. G., Los Angeles, Calif.

A. Several factors are taken into consideration. A site is chosen where there is a large number of clear nights in a year, where the air is free of dust and haze, where the altitude is high enough for the site to be above the most dense part of the atmosphere, where a dry climate assures cloudless skies, where the smoke and artificial lights of cities are absent. To this must be added the factor of "good seeing" as opposed to "bad seeing," i. e., geological and physical factors, plus a host of other minor details pertaining to temperature variance, accessibility, and many other things. It is a problem that requires much research and consideration before decision is made, covering perhaps years of local observation.

Q. Could you tell me what light is?—Miss Mabel Schaeffer, Evanston, Illinois.

A. Light is physically defined as radiant energy, which is capable of producing the effect of vision. Light waves consisting of vibrations in the ether, sent out by the sun and other luminous bodies, strike the retina of the eye, causing the optic nerve to vibrate, thus producing the sensation of sight. As to what the vibration actually is, since we don't even know what ether is, we are unable to define.

Q. Has the surface of Venus ever been seen?—John Lawrence, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

A. Venus is wrapped in eternal clouds, of great density, and these clouds never break. However, there is one astronomical record (not a photo) of such a break, and of a duck-shaped continent.

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SECOND BIG ISSUE—ON SALE MAY 19

MONTHLY MERIT AWARD

WHERE is Roger Davis? David V. Reed, writing his first story in *Amazing Stories*, asked that question in the May issue. Who will win the \$50.00 Merit Award for May? was the question we asked. And the answer? You guessed it. "Where Is Roger Davis?" by David V. Reed, topped all rivals for the Monthly Merit Award. His story received 313 votes out of a possible 385. The complete tabulation follows: (first number is votes polled, and second is rating on percentage basis, assuming 100% to be perfect.)

| <i>Title</i> | <i>Author</i> | <i>Votes</i> | <i>Rating</i> |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Where Is Roger Davis?..... | David V. Reed..... | 313 | .81 |
| 2. Secret of the Buried City..... | John Russell Fearn..... | 273 | .71 |
| 3. The Weapon Too Dreadful to Use..... | Isaac Asimov..... | 221 | .57 |
| 4. The Foreign Legion of Mars..... | Frederic A. Kummer, Jr. . | 193 | .50 |
| 5. The Curse of Montezuma..... | Ed Earl Repp..... | 189 | .49 |
| 6. War With Jupiter..... | W. L. Hamling & M. Reinsberg... | 164 | .43 |
| 7. The City of Oblivion..... | Bradner Buckner..... | 158 | .41 |

Mr. Reed's story rated one percentage point better than last month's winner, and is therefore the best story we have published since we began our Award policy. The rating is exceptionally high considering that John Russell Fearn also jumped two points over the second place rating of last month, therefore presenting tougher competition. Also, the rating for the entire issue, 60%, was five points higher than last month, indicating greater competition all the way.

Special mention should be made of the fine showing of Isaac Asimov in getting third spot. It bids well for his future efforts.

The voting this month fell off from the first month. Let's get together, readers, and fill out those coupons. If you prefer not to, simply write your preferences on a separate sheet of paper. It will be accepted, provided all stories are listed. Where only one story is mentioned, we allow a certain amount of credit, but a more accurate result may be obtained if all are rated.

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AMAZING STORIES

608 S. Dearborn Street

Chicago, Illinois

In my opinion the stories in the July issue of *AMAZING STORIES* rank as follows:

| | No. Here |
|--|----------|
| SECRET OF THE PYRAMID, by Robert Moore Williams..... | |
| THE TRIAL OF ADAM LINK, ROBOT, by Eando Binder..... | |
| PE-RA, DAUGHTER OF THE SUN, by Ralph Milne Farley..... | |
| WHEN TIME STOOD STILL, by Edwin K. Sloat..... | |
| JOHN HALE CONVICTS A KILLER, by Ed Earl Repp..... | |
| THE PIT OF DEATH, by Don Wilcox..... | |
| NAME..... | |
| ADDRESS..... | |
| CITY.....STATE..... | |

TWO EARTHMEN, BATTLING THEIR WAY ACROSS A WARRIOR WORLD!

Let ARTHUR R. TOFFE, master of adventure, tell you about them. Here are a few paragraphs of a really great story, just to give you an idea of the treat in store for you:

WITH a wrench of his arm, Sellery threw himself bodily ahead, the force of his earth-muscles sending him clear beyond the end of the space ship.

And in the instant that he looked up, his blood froze in horror!

There—standing immobile a few score yards away like an army awaiting the sound of the trumpet to charge, were thousands of bronze-colored Martian warriors. Eight and nine foot giants they were, with long legs and comparatively small torsos from which two long arms extended. A third, much shorter arm, stuck out from the middle of the chest and was obviously used for holding the shields the men carried before them. In their two side hands they carried twin swords—almost as long as the men themselves.

Sellery gulped at the sight. Then he raised his right arm in the universal gesture of friendliness. Still no response and no motion from the warriors standing silently before him.

"Let us get back in the space ship," Tolobo pleaded. "These Martians mean to kill us."

"How do you know?" Sellery asked, unwilling to retreat.

"I know," Tolobo said. "I feel. I can feel their thoughts. They mean to kill us."

Sellery looked at his friend. Tolobo had often proved that he could get telepathic messages over a distance. Perhaps these Martians did mean to kill them. But why did they stand there so quietly?

Suddenly a rift was made in their ranks. Straight as a highway, a path was opened, and down this path came quickly one being.

Tolobo seized Sellery by the arm and cried desperately:

"Come quickly before it is too late! Do not wait!"

But the scientist stood rooted to the spot. For the being stepping lightly from between the ranks of the soldiery was a woman!

Never in all his life had he seen such a perfect feminine being. Here, before him, was the ultimate woman!

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AND OTHER ARTICLES IN THE BIG AUGUST ISSUE OF

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**ON
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JUNE 9**

Meet the Authors

EDWIN K. SLOAT Author of
WHEN TIME STOOD STILL

I SHALL always have a warm spot in my heart for AMAZING STORIES, for it published the first science fiction story I ever wrote—almost the first story I ever sold. AMAZING was then the One and Only magazine of its type on the newsstands. That was 'way back—about 1927, I think. The local paper made a slight mention of my story, "Flight to Venus," and the news dealer at once sold every copy of AMAZING STORIES he had received, a stack about as tall as a wood burning stove. He nearly collapsed from bewilderment, having missed the item in the paper. For a couple of weeks I knew what Fame was.

H. G. Wells made an incurable science fiction fan out of me with his "Food of the Gods," which I read in the days of bare feet when I was supposed to be studying geography. I'm still incurable and will always be. I think science fiction is a growing type of literature. With streamlined trains, 300-mile-an-hour planes, advances in medicine, radio, television and rocketry now commonplace and more and newer discoveries and inventions constantly being introduced, it would be very strange if stories dealing with advances in science and of the probable future would not be in demand. And with the loyal, enthusiastic, growing legion of readers it has, there can be no doubt that science fiction will become one of the big fields of modern literature.

A few months ago, you remember, it looked a lot like war in Europe. In fact, things looked so black, a good many people thought there was no possibility of avoiding it. Radios blared war, newspapers screamed it, and in every home, factory and office people talked and worried about it. Was there no place, I wondered, where a sane person might lead an untroubled, satisfactory, and civilized life? Then Chamberlain went to Munich, and there was no war. Not for a while at least. Then it occurred to me that this abrupt change—about of plans must have put some of the government lads here and there about the earth in a heck of a spot. Out of these two ideas grew my story, "When Time Stood Still." Maybe there are actually such places as Futura. Who knows?—Edwin K. Sloat, Fort Madison, Iowa.

EANDO BINDER Author of
THE TRIAL OF ADAM LINK, ROBOT

A GROUP of science-fiction fans of the "old guard," whose gatherings I've attended here in New York City, have discussed at times the "mission" of science-fiction. If it has a mission at all, I would say science-fiction teaches one im-

portant thing—to look ahead rather than back. It presents likely problems and tasks of the future of civilization, and there will be many.

One that may or may not turn up is the robot question. Suppose science were to actually achieve a living, thinking entity of metal and inorganic materials. What's to be done about it? What would you suggest about the problem? Should such a form of created, independent life be allowed to exist at all?

A pretty far-fetched problem, perhaps, and one that may never face mankind, if the secrets of life defy discovery, but it is the basis of this story. Being the sequel to *I, ROBOT* in the January issue, its robot character is again Adam Link, an intellect of metal and electricity, created by man. I've presented one possible variation of that moment of destiny when the first of intelligent robots writes a question-mark in the future scroll of history.

Somehow, the whole issue fascinates me. Once before in history, or prehistory, such a problem arose—when Cromagnon (*homo sapiens*) faced Neanderthal, and realized he had a rival for the mastery of Earth. That is, if he realized it objectively. Cromagnon, child of raw nature, solved the problem quite simply—by killing off Neanderthal, as Manly Wade Wellman so splendidly portrayed in his story *BATTLE IN THE DAWN*.

Incidentally, at this point let me lay part of the inspiration for this story at the doorstep of Wellman. Reading his *BATTLE IN THE DAWN* (in the same issue with *I, ROBOT*), the struggle for mastery between Cromagnon and Neanderthal was the seed that later grew into the duplicate problem of Man facing Robot. And realizing he is confronted by a possible rival intelligence. Only, to keep away from other stories of the same nature, I twisted the viewpoint around, in what I hope is a unique way.—Eando Binder, New York City.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS Author of
SECRET OF THE PYRAMID

BORN June 19, 1907, at Farmington, Mo. Just in case you don't know, that's down among the Ozarks. At present I'm living in Chicago. Six feet tall, weigh 190 pounds more or less, usually more. Married.

I've been writing fiction exactly two years. Don't ask me why I started. All rights to all the ways that question can be asked have already been copyrighted by my thoughtful friends, to my great annoyance. It usually happens something like this: An otherwise normal lad, earning an honest living pumping gasoline in a service station, yields to an urge that has been annoying him in secret for

years. He locks the pumps, throws the keys of the station at his supervisor, buys, begs, borrows, or steals a typewriter, hunts himself up an attic, and begins to annoy the already long-suffering editors. Usually he has quietly starved to death inside of six months, or is back pumping gasoline, a wiser and a sadder man.

Well, I wasn't pumping gasoline. I quit that job four years ago. I was earning a comfortable living and with reasonable hard work could look forward to a nice succession of desks ornamented with my name. But I wasn't happy about the whole thing. No matter how I looked at those desks, I would still be behind them. The longer I looked, the less happy I became. When I got too unhappy, I explained to the boss that he had better hire himself another boy, for my position was being vacated with extreme rapidity.

I guess I never was any happier than when I thumbed my nose at that job. No, I didn't starve. The fate that looks after fools and drunkards had her eye on me all the time. I didn't—and still don't—know anything about writing stories, but checks started arriving, with large gaps between them. Now the gaps are growing steadily smaller and the checks are growing steadily larger. The fate that looks after fools—I'm no drunkard—still has her eye on me. Daily, hourly I render unto her the homage that is her due, for I damn well appreciate the way she has taken care of me.

I started writing science-fiction because— Well, a very long time ago I read in an old magazine (there were no science-fiction magazines in existence then) a yarn that thrilled me more than any story before or since. I don't remember the name of the story or the author (I think it was Merritt's "The Metal Emperor" but I'm not sure). The only thing I remember is the thundering kick I got out of reading it. Later, science-fiction magazines came along, and I started reading them. When I started writing, naturally I turned to the field that gave me the biggest thrill—science-fiction, to the field that looked like it had the widest possibilities of growth. Both editors and readers have been kind to me, far kinder than I have deserved, so, in closing let me say—"Thanks to all of you."—Robert Moore Williams, Chicago, Illinois.

RALPH MILNE FARLEY Author of
PE-RA, DAUGHTER OF THE SUN

RALPH MILNE FARLEY is well known to our readers. Ever since his first "radio story" appeared in the *Argosy* in 1924, he has been writing science fiction, fantastic adventures, weirds, detective stories, and gangster stories.

This magazine published his "The Degravator" way back in 1932, and recently has published his "Time for Sale," and his collaboration with Stanley G. Weinbaum, "Revolution of 1950," and lastly, his "The Radio Man Returns."

He writes us:

"Although 'Pe-Ra, Daughter of the Sun' was originally inspired by Senator Asbust's plan to have the United States buy lower California, added point is now given to the story by the reported present plan of a syndicate of rich Americans of all faiths to establish there a haven for the oppressed minorities of Central Europe."

DON WILCOX Author of
THE PIT OF DEATH

I WAS born within a few miles of one of the geographical centers of the United States (there are three or four scattered around through Kansas) thirty-one years ago—back in the days when the creeks still ran and severe dust storms were something to be complained about.

I was brought up on public schools, swimming holes, musical instruments, and Mark Twain.

As a boy I learned how much fun it was to dig caves and what grueling labor it was to hoe the garden—even though the former occupation afforded more blisters.

I led the Tarzan movement among the youth of my home town. We had a wonderful gorge full of rocks and caves and trees. Tarzan would have loved it. In one place we could swing from tree to tree—and back to tree again. The doctors of our village were indebted to me for a goodly run of Tarzan business—several broken arms and legs and a back or two.

Eventually I underwent the transition from the dangerous life of a semi-civilized Tarzan to the far more perilous existence of an over-civilized school teacher.

While teaching English I would frequently admonish my theme-writing students to use more imagination! MORE IMAGINATION!! Poor kids—I longed to write their stories for them. George Bernard Shaw's words burned in my ears: "He who can do; he who cannot teaches." I desired to join the "does" class.

The desire grew when my wife and I began writing plays for high school students and discovered we could market them.

Returning to my alma mater, the University of Kansas, for graduate studies, I found interest in drama, journalism, and sociology. These studies offered juicy nourishment for the would-be writer. Then there was a creative writing class of five or six members who met at the home of an author to drink tea and lash each other's literary efforts—two wholesome exercises for budding authors.

I was treated to three years of serving on the sociology staff of a university, where I enjoyed sharing ideas with a few hundred students.

At length the long-awaited embarking upon the professional writing career was undertaken. I have recently moved, with my wife and baby, to Chicago, where I write radio script for a broadcasting corporation and do free-lancing.—Don Wilcox, Chicago, Illinois.



WEALTH FREE!

-IF YOU CAN GET IT

By MORRISON COLLADAY

SO far as we know, the geni of Arabian Nights tradition are no longer operating. But assume for the sake of argument that you come across one some day and that he offers you all the wealth contained in any cubic mile of the earth. Which particular mile would you choose?

You would probably consider carefully a mile of New York or London, the Rand gold fields, the South African diamond mines, the Mesopotamian oil country. However, if you chose any of these you would be a piker. If you wanted to be richer than all the other rich men of the world put together, you would choose a cubic mile of the ocean. Any cubic mile.

Remember? The offer was all the wealth contained in any cubic mile of the earth. You didn't have to get it out yourself. That's the catch. Any cubic mile of the ocean probably contains enough wealth to pay the national debt, but at the present time we know no way to extract it economically.

There is a chemical company with a plant in North Carolina which extracts bromine from sea water. Bromine is one of the principal constituents of anti-knock motor fuels, and sea water is the cheapest source of supply. The water is pumped through the plant where it is brought into contact with a gas that combines with the bromine to form ethylene dibromide.

This chemical company has issued a report of its work, in which it lists the wealth that is going to waste in the sea water after the bromine has been extracted. The figures given are for a cubic mile of water, though the plant has used nothing like that much in the few years of its existence.

First there is gold—8,600 pounds, worth \$5,000,000. Silver, 135 tons, worth \$2,500,000. Then comes iron, 1,250 tons, and 800 tons of copper. Aluminum begins counting up again—11,000 tons, worth \$4,

500,000. And the amount of magnesium is really important; 4,200,000 tons—\$2,000,000,000.

Our mile of sea water contains several hundred times as much radium as the world possesses today, and radium is supposed to be worth something like \$20,000,000 a pound. There is a vast amount of sodium chloride, ordinary salt—108,000,000 tons, worth \$2,500,000,000, if the supply didn't break the price, as of course it would.

Ten million tons of calcium chloride would be worth \$200,000,000 at present prices; and 5,250,000 tons of potassium chloride, \$425,000,000. Iodine, 275 tons of it, a paltry \$325,000 worth. But 46,500,000 tons of magnesium sulphate could be sold, if the price didn't break, for \$1,750,000,000.

This list of minerals and chemical compounds doesn't begin to exhaust the contents of our cubic mile of sea water. It is impossible even to guess at the value of the animal and plant life it contains. So far, science has obtained only a glimpse of the myriad uses to which sea plants could be put. We know that hundreds of chemicals used in industry can be extracted from kelp alone.

At the present time only our genie could provide us with all this wealth, but it doesn't necessarily follow that that will always be true. The problem of extracting it is one of low cost power. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the sea will sometime provide even that.

We have two methods of getting power from the sea. Neither is perfected. One is by harnessing the tides. The other is by making use of the difference in temperature of the water at different depths.

With virtually costless power, except for interest on money invested in the plant, it would be commercially feasible to discharge our genie and do the work ourselves.

DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brick-bats will have an equal chance. Letter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

THIS "SCROUNGER" IS APPRECIATED *Sirs:*

I have been reading your book for a long time now, but, I must say that the last 3 or 4 issues have been absolutely swell. And I do mean SWELL. I have never seen a magazine yet that could, in that time, change their stories from something just called a book to something that is really worth going after. What I mean is this, I used to be an operator at the Herald Radio Station C.F.A.C. and had quite a bit of time on my hands, someone lent me an AMAZING magazine and I read it—it wasn't so good though. Then they really started to get good and now I have been out of work since January 1st and I don't know where my next \$ is coming from, yet I will scrounge for 20c to get my AMAZING.

I am sure waiting for the May issue. The stories in the April issue were very good. The best being "World Without Women," a very good, and well laid-out plot, and thoroughly worked out to the end. I would like to see more stories by this Author as well as Mr. Repp.

I figured you would be glad to hear from a fellow way up here in Canada.

Keep up the good work and I sure hope I will be able to get your AMAZING every month. There's really only one KICK I have and that is that I start at the front of your book and before I know it the book is finished and the clock says 12 o'clock.

Bill Motbey,
75—6th Street, West,
Calgary, Canada.

PIPES AND SWEETS

Sirs:

Pipes and sweets in these ears is "Where is Roger Davis?" easily upwards of any yarn AMAZING has printed since you pulled the phoenix act on us. Symphonic poems of commendation will be yours and deservedly which you will share with author Reed, but let us go to the Admirable Asimov whose "Weapon Too Dreadful to Use" is eclipsed only by the above-mentioned opus. A pity friend Davis couldn't wait until the next issue to Asimov's halo could shine undimmed by the Honourable Reed. Incidentally, give us still more mas. of the Asimov: which same should be said of William F. Temple, and Morris J. Steele.

Ancient Mr. Brueckel's observation on writers in-

difference to the various political theories and realities, he forgets that whether or not the writer is aware of them, everything he writes reflects some sort of propaganda to some degree. No writer can escape it. If he does not express definite opinions of his own, then, through his negative attitude he gives strength to whatever theory has most influenced him. If he has ideas of his own, and they coincide, for the most part, with the prevailing theories and political realities, then for the most part, they will go unchallenged as such (except by militant minority groups, perchance) but, if his theories or non-conformist, whether or not he belongs to, or is even conscious of the existence of, minority, oppositional political cliques or groups, he will immediately find himself classed as a propagandist. What particular political theories any sf author prefers are, of course, his own business, however, attitudes are potent things. And any author's attitude, conscious or otherwise, is (in the last analysis) either for progress or against progress. Which is why, in this reader's opinion, sf writers cannot afford to be indifferent, and should take care to observe just which side their attitudes are aiding and abetting: progress or antiprogres.

Steven Gray,
Reig Ave.,
Stamford, Conn.

● Your comments on propaganda are well put, and we thank you for this angle. It expresses our own views to a tee.—Ed.

MR. KUMMER STATES . . .

Sirs:

First of all, the cover. It was good, although it does not compare at all with the April issue. I personally dislike seeing a human figure occupying the greater surface of a painting, especially if the painting is supposed to be amazing, and Heaven knows that a human figure is not so extremely amazing.

As for the best story in the issue? Well, for my choice I prefer "City of Oblivion" by Bradner Buckner. My choice for second place goes to the "Foreign Legion of Mars" by Frederick Arnold Kummer, Jr. I liked these two stories respectively because of their high degree of rapid action and interesting adventure.

Mr. Kummer states that "pure antimony" plated by electrolysis will explode upon being hit a sharp

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blow, or upon being slightly heated. I contest this allegedly stated fact. As far as I know, antimony will do nothing of the sort; and I am backed up with this assertion by my chemistry instructor at Lane, who steadfastly denies the plausibility of any such chemical property of the metal.

Maybe I am wrong? Anyway, I would like to have some of the other readers comment on this issue, either to verify, or to prove my contention false. . . .

Your best features of the magazine are: the "Observatory" and "Meet the Authors."

W. Lawrence Hamling,
2509 Argyle Street,
Chicago, Illinois.

● How about this, Mr. Kummer? Let's have an answer for Mr. Hamling. And, readers, let's thrash out this question of covers. Mr. Hamling has brought up one side of the argument; he wants less people, more machines. Do you prefer a cover like the April issue, with its huge robot, or do you like a cover such as the May and June issues?—Ed.

BEHIND THE 8 BALL

Sirs:

I was very much disappointed to read that "The Strange Flight of Richard Clayton," was judged the best story in the March issue of AMAZING STORIES. In my opinion it would have rated a very poor last on the list. The plot was too transparent. Immediately after beginning the story I realized how it was going to end. It seems inconceivable that a man willing to make that great a sacrifice would build a windowless space ship. Surely he would want to see the wonders of space as well as know where he was landing when he reached Mars. Therefore I again say it was a very poor attempt at a story.

I agree with the readers who think the feminine element adds interest to a story, sort of rounds it out with a human touch.

The magazine as a whole is all right as it stands, but don't start any serials. Some readers criticize just about every story in an issue as though nothing suits them. Let them attempt to write a story of their own. They will soon realize that the sphere looming in front of them, has a big wumeral "8" on the other side of it.

Jay Blaine,
537 East Ohio St.,
Marquette, Michigan.

● Mr. Bloch, in building his space ship, has done something that very many readers have pointed out in previous discussions. He has built his space ship without windows, because in reality, windows are one of the biggest problems of space ship designers. The necessity of being vacuum tight, of great strength, etc., make windows somewhat impractical. Also, navigation in space would be by instrument, not by sight, therefore vision is not absolutely necessary. The story, may we point out, was not a story of a voyage to Mars, but of a man who lost his time sense.—Ed.

NATURAL LOOKING PEOPLE

Sirs:

So they say that Paul can't draw natural look-

ing people, hey? Well, as soon as I lapped the creature Mr. Fuqua painted, I came to the conclusion that here is real competition with him for the honor of who can draw the most unhuman looking humans. The critter resembles nothing so much as a wax statue fresh from some museum. And who is he supposed to represent, anyway? Mr. Fearn's hero were no uniform so far as I could discern. And of course there is the usual over-sufficient amount of brilliant, hard, and garish color Mr. Fuqua delights in splashing about. I think that he is potentially a fine sf. artist but as yet only potentially. If he were to eliminate people in the foreground and throw away his supply of red paint, substituting machines, spaceships, and more realistic colors, well...!! But of course, that's too much to hope for.

Interior illustrations: the one for "War With Jupiter" is the very berries, and other good ones grace "Secret of the Buried City," "City of Oblivion," and "Curse of Montezuma."

Two stories make this issue your best yet, "Where is Roger Davis?" by David V. Reed, and "The Weapon Too Dreadful to Use" by Isaac Asimov. The former is a real masterpiece, says I! In fact, it ranks first among the stuff you have presented since taking over. A few more yarns like this and you may get some place. At present they come too widely separated by blood-and-thunders of a low quality. I would advise you to put detectives on Mr. Reed's trail, to make sure he doesn't get away with contributing you only one story. Please present him again, soon and often! He is tremendously good.

Isaac Asimov's piece is a good deal better than average, too. For once we have Earthians pictured as something besides benevolent guardian angels. The truth is not always pleasant and judging by present world conditions, the situation Mr. Asimov describes is not at all overdrawn.

Robert Jackson,
239 W. State St.,
Burlington, Ohio.

● Here's more on cover subject matter. But we weren't depicting Fearn's hero. This scene is just one of the many seen by Fearn's hero in his vision of the past holocaust when the sleepers retired to their underground world to escape the first visit of the "return to bestiality." It is a scene of a retrograding killer diving his own fighting ship in unreasoning rage at the city below him. It is the scene that the hero sees through the "viewing machine" in the underground city, as the robots reveal the past to him.—Ed.

CONVENTION SPONSORS

Sirs:

The purpose of this letter is to ask that you withdraw any support from the NEW FANDOM group which you have, or intend to, throw their way. This convention is strictly a fan affair, and I can't understand how you pro sf editors fit into the picture. Maybe the NEW FANDOM group knew their inability to swing the venture alone, so ran to the pro editors for assistance. It is only fair to the original convention committee that you make a public statement in your magazine to this effect that you no longer feel that you can sup-

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CRYN Electrical School,
604 S. Pauline St., Dept. 30-31, Chicago

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port the NEW FANDOM group as the sponsors of the convention. This will give the logical sponsors a chance to swing the convention into working order and put on a real stiff convention.

*Olen F. Wiggins,
2251 Walton St.,
Denver, Colorado.*

● Some months ago we published a letter we received concerning a fan convention to be held at New York's World's Fair. However, it seems from this new source that the convention is also being sponsored by the committee spoken for by Mr. Wiggins. We wish, therefore, in fairness to all, to refer our readers interested in a fan convention to Mr. Wiggins for information we lack.

However, Mr. Wiggins, you rather falsely accuse us of interference, when in reality, we impartially announce any and all activities by our readers who seem to be acting out of interest in science fiction, and therefore, in our magazine. We cannot offer either support or condemnation of any single fan organization, but merely offer such letters to discussions which seem to be of some current interest to readers of discussions. And to say that "pro" editors aren't science fiction fans seems an odd statement, because your editors get a huge kick out of AMAZING STORIES, both as entertainment, and as a job. It seems fitting to us to suggest that science fiction fans interested in a science fiction convention would do well to pool their resources and we offer that thought as the only other means we have of being helpful. Your editors wish you all the fullest success in a science fiction convention, but from where we sit, we can't differentiate between various groups of fans, excepting that both seem to be working on the same activity.
—Ed.

HEAT IN SPACE

Sir:

Behold, my two cents worth on the subject of hot and cold space. First let me point out that the terms "hot" and "cold" are very loosely used. There is no such thing as cold, except in comparison to heat. When the temperature drops to 50 degrees in the fall, we say it is getting cold. When it rises to 50 degrees in the early spring we complain about the heat. Evidently then, cold and hot are merely relative terms. Point number two: Space has no heat—"nothing" can have no heat, and space is "nothing." If we measure the temperature of water and find it to be 150 degrees F, we are correct in saying the water is 150 degrees. But actually it is the temperature of the thermometer we have registered. If we put this same thermometer in space it will not measure the temperature because space is nothing. However it will register something. It will have first of all its own heat, second it will receive heat from every radiating body in space (the sun's heat being paramount of course), and third it will lose a certain amount of heat thru radiation.

Allen Hunter's theory fell down at this point. He failed to mention that a body loses heat thru conduction, convection, and radiation. He has naturally discarded the first, the second must obviously go too, as there are no currents of

liquids or gases in space. There remains the third point, radiation. Every warm body loses a certain amount of heat by radiation. Thus the thermometer would register a balance between the amount of heat received and the amount lost thru radiation. In short, space is neither hot nor cold. In closing let me remind you that the sun's rays are radiant energy, not heat. This energy becomes heat when it comes in contact with matter.

Charles W. Jarvis,
2097 Ingelhart,
St. Paul, Minn.

FROZEN BODIES IN THE VOID

Clare:

In regard to this matter of the supposed freezing of a human being in the void, I think that it can be easily settled referring to any physics text. Bodies at the very low temperature of only approximately one hundred degrees Fahrenheit would certainly not radiate a very great amount of energy when exposed to the practically absolute zero of space. When you cited your example of the filament of an electric light bulb not fusing because of its enormous radiation rate, I think you failed to consider the fact that it was at an extremely high temperature. Furthermore, the radiation rate does not merely vary, as the temperature, or even as the square of the temperature. Indeed, the radiation rate depends quite strongly on the nature of the surface of the energy emitting body. And I would hardly be inclined to consider the light-colored, comparatively smooth, skin of the human body, as a good or even fair radiator at the relatively low temperature at which it functions.

Henry Bell,
6309 Grace Street,
Chicago, Illinois.

● The foregoing two letters seem self explanatory. We have received many other letters on both subjects, and these two are presented as typical.—Ed

STORIES AND ARTICLES

Size:

John R. Fearn's *Secret of the Buried City* was tops. This story teamed perfectly with the 3rd point on the back cover. The romance was just right, not too mushy. Krupa did a very nice job of illustrating. Mr. Fearn seems to have carried on the reputation of English S-F. War With Jupiter by Hamling & Reinsburg was unusual. By unusual I mean that it evolved the Time Capsule into its plot. War with other worlds is time worn, but when 20th century science becomes the factor that saves a world, well, that's different. The Foreleson Legion of Mars was very good.

The Observatory was very interesting. The article about the Star of Bethlehem was excellent. I believe that it must have been the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction, because it is now suspected that the birth of Christ occurred about 7 B.C. The time of the conjunction. The mystery of the Marie Celeste solved once and for all? Fine. It had always bothered me what had happened to that ship. The Science Quiz was good this month, so was Riddles of Science by Joe Sewell.

It seems to me as far back as August you had

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The readers who are constantly yelling for trimmed edges, large size, etc., will evidently have to be satisfied with our companion mag, FANTASTIC, and AMAZING will continue to be tucked away with the low down pulps. Ah me, I don't suppose we can have everything!

Maxwell Wright,
525 Royal Street,
New Orleans, La.

● Yes, Kummer has given us nothing new in idea, but his treatment was unusual, and refreshing. We are glad to note you give Mr. Gelula such a big hand on his return to AMAZING STORIES. We note from the unpublished portion of your letter that the story you refer to appeared in March and April, 1930. It was "The Green Girl," by Jack Williamson. That does make you an old timer.—Ed.

EARLY SCIENCE FICTION AUTHORS

Sirs:

It is good to know that you're bringing back some of the early s-f authors. Abner J. Gelula's return this month was well received here. And I see you have Edwin K. Sloss scheduled for July.

Please retain Fuqua on the covers. His work on the April and May issues was excellent.

I like your present system of printing complete stories, but in time I think the readers will prefer a change. A serial once in a while would be welcome. Also a few short-short tales. The latter type has always been well received in science fiction.

The Observatory and Discussions are the best departments in AMAZING. And before I forget it, accept my thanks for one important thing. You have no ads between the contents page and the first story!

Cyrus Fout,
CCC Co. 2770,
Red Wing, Minn.
April 13, 1939.

● The general opinion in letters to the editors seems to be against serials, but in favor of longer stories. However, there is enough in favor of serials so that we are seriously considering several. Also the question of longer stories. As for short-shorts, we'd be glad to print them, if we could get them. How about it, authors? Can you produce a few good ones?—Ed.

ARTISTIC MERIT

Sirs:

Does artistic merit lie in being able to think up weird, complicated, and unconvincing contraptions, and painting them in bright colors, with a beautiful shen and constellations of highlights all over them? If so, Fuqua is a marvel. But why point with so much pride to the April cover?

Mechanical intricacy of that robot doesn't make it a masterpiece. Or, if it does, then the blueprints of some of the more complicated of the present day inventions, and the drawings of them, should hang in an art gallery.



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On our back cover this month artist Julian S. Krupa has painted his conception of the most powerful weapon that could ever be devised. He has envisioned an artificial satellite that could be built in space and set to circling the earth just as the moon does, on an orbit perhaps 10,000 miles above the surface, well out of the atmosphere, and at a height best calculated to make it effective over a wide radius. Its potency is manifold.

First, and primarily, it is a sun power machine. It utilizes the rays of the sun in a very simple manner, yet an extremely powerful one. We all have used a small magnifying glass, or a concave mirror to concentrate the rays of the sun. We all know how easy it is to burn a piece of paper, or wood with a mirror only an inch or two in diameter. Therefore, all these giant mirrors, concentrating sunlight on a single spot, would create a heat ray far beyond the imaginings of any science fiction writer in its deadly effectiveness.

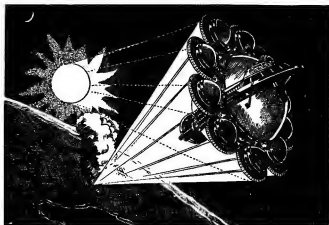
In the accompanying illustration, Krupa has shown the space devastator in operation, sending a ravaging beam of terrible heat down upon a defenseless city 10,000 miles below. With such a threat hanging over it, what nation could afford to become a belligerent? It would be forced to settle

its differences in a peaceful manner, according to the dictates of the committee, country, or police force placed in control of the space devastator. War would be impossible with such a potent "big stick" to hold over ambitious warlords and dictators.

Second, and perhaps more important, is the use of this artificial satellite in peaceful pursuits. There are numberless tasks it could perform. It could provide daylight in a normal manner, impossible to differentiate from the real thing. It could provide daylight illumination on any area, during times of flood, disaster, storm, or tragedy where daylight would be a vast help in rescue work.

It could control weather to a great degree, breaking up storm formations, cloud areas, or stopping blizzards. Conversely, it could create cloud formations by drawing up ocean moisture. It could provide aid to crops needing sunlight. It could melt snow from storm-bound cities.

Imagine a destructive hurricane, sweeping in from the sea, toward the large cities of Florida. It could be driven like a herd of helpless cattle before the intense heat of the rays from the space devastator. It could even be destroyed, disipated, halted in its progress.



An entire city could be destroyed within an hour by this concentrated beam of sunlight

Even the tremendous cost of this artificial satellite would be a mere trifle beside the savings it could effect, and the wealth it could create. As a guardian angel in the prevention and lessening of disaster, its value would be inestimable.

The savings in electrical power in lighting a great city would be enormous. Also, power could be generated in enormous amounts through the building of giant steam generators in isolated areas. Heat from a concentrated sunbeam would provide steam to operate giant turbines. Sun power stations would supplant water power stations, at a much cheaper original cost and upkeep.

Other strange uses, of great practicality, would be numerous. Icebergs could be melted and destroyed as a menace to shipping. A northern shipping route could be kept open the year around. Arctic ship travel could be made possible. Jungle lands could be cleared by the simple expedient of burning away the jungle, leaving a rich ashy loam of great agricultural value.

Areas of disease and plague could be cleared of germs by constant sunlight. Malaria zones could be freed of mosquitoes. Health centers of constant sunshine could be operated.

The livable areas of the earth could be increased by thirty percent, by moderation of climate, control of ice and snow, and of rain. Deserts could be made livable through artificially induced rainfall. The Sahara, the Gobi, the American deserts



Cities could be normally sunlit during the night



Icebergs could be melted and destroyed as a menace to shipping

could be made fruitful. Tobacco, cotton, corn crops could be controlled. Disastrous droughts, excess and ruinous rainfall could be prevented.

Third, assuming the foregoing to apply directly to the present, the future value of such a space machine can easily be imagined. Interplanetary travel would be vastly benefited by the facility of such stations as a means of communication between planets and space ships in the void. Signals would be sent by code light flashes, and range would be unlimited. Weather or static conditions would have no effect on communication by light rays between worlds.

Also, this machine would act as a spacial lighthouse, guiding incoming space ships to the proper landing areas. Ships not actually landing on the planet could also use the space devastator as a way station, discharging passengers or freight, to be relayed to earth in small rocket ships.

The problem of building such a space machine as this is not as complicated as it would seem. Once space travel is an actuality, materials could be transported to the orbit selected for the space devastator, and once placed in this position, would remain there. Workmen could assemble them in space, and the machine would be built on the "site." Once completed, it would be firmly anchored in its place, its course mathematically computed by astronomers, and its every function thereafter subject only to mathematical calculation. Not one, but many, serving humanity.

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It would eliminate war. But its uses would be beneficial in other ways. Weather could be controlled. Cities could be sunlit at night. Icebergs could be melted. Sun-power plants could be operated. It would be the perfect observatory. It would be a boon to space travel, as a landing station. It could communicate with ships and planets far away by light rays. For full details see page 144. © AMAZING STORIES 1939.